ASEAN Identity:

Now and Beyond

ASEAN Identity: Now and Beyond

Post Publication of the Symposium on ASEAN Identity and Strengthening ASEAN-ROK Cooperation: Now and Beyond

ASEAN Secretariat

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The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established on 8 August 1967. The Member States are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam.

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Catalogue-in-Publication Data

ASEAN Identity: Now and Beyond – Post-Publication of the Symposium on ASEAN Identity and Strengthening ASEAN-ROK Cooperation: Now and Beyond
Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, October 2023

ASEAN: A Community of Opportunities for All

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This publication was produced by the ASEAN Secretariat with the support from the Mission of the Republic of Korea to ASEAN through the ASEAN-Korea Cooperation Fund (AKCF).

FOREWORD

It is with great pleasure to present the *"ASEAN Identity: Now and Beyond",* a post-publication of the Symposium on *Fostering ASEAN Identity and Enhancing ASEAN-ROK Cooperation: Now and Beyond* which had gathered scholars, the media, creative practitioners, youth, and officials to discuss ways to further amplify ASEAN awareness and foster ASEAN Identity.

The think pieces in this publication lend multiple perspectives on how we can foster ASEAN Identity, and represent the aspirations and hopes of the contributors on what this means to them, as well as how we can deepen the *"we"* feeling in making ASEAN our home. Contributors to the publication also highlighted the importance in deepening youth engagement and promoting people-to-people exchanges in creating a greater regional sense of belonging, and stressed the strong correlation between promoting shared values and identity-building through culture and the arts.

The think pieces also drew on lessons that we could learn from the experiences of the Republic of Korea (ROK), and includes comparative analyses of the efforts of other regional inter-governmental organisations in fostering a shared identity. It further provides substantive recommendations and proposed new ways to reframe and recalibrate ASEAN Identity, as ASEAN forges a new vision beyond 2025.

This publication underscores the longstanding cooperation with our valued partner, the Republic of Korea, who was a strong supporter to the Symposium last year. Several contributors from the ROK shared their insights and thoughts on the lessons we can draw from the success of *Hallyu,* and proposed ways to forge greater mutual cooperation especially in the creative sectors to celebrate all things between ASEAN and ROK.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Korea, through the ROK Mission to ASEAN and the ASEAN-ROK Project Management Team, for their strong support in organising the Symposium and for this post-Symposium publication. I am confident that this publication will enrich our conversations to foster a deeper sense of regional belonging among the ASEAN peoples, as we continue to strengthen and build ASEAN as *A Community of Opportunities for All.*

DR. KAO KIM HOURN
Secretary-General of ASEAN

FOREWORD

ASEAN considers the identity as one of the key foundations of ASEAN integration. According to the narrative of ASEAN identity adopted by the 37th ASEAN Summit in 2020, ASEAN identity shall strengthen the ASEAN community and will enhance common values with a higher degree of we-feeling and sense of belonging and sharing in all the benefits of the regional integration.

It has been 16 years since 10 ASEAN Member States adopted the ASEAN Charter in 2007 along with the commitment to “One vision, One identity, One community”. Nevertheless, ASEAN identity still remains unexplored and needs more efforts to be cultivated, especially in young generation.

We cannot neglect the fact that there are many differences in religion, political system and culture in this region. However, it is not our differences that divide us but our inability to recognise, accept, and celebrate those differences. In this context, ASEAN is already aware that cultural approach is of great significance in consolidating ASEAN identity.

For instance, I take note of the ASEAN Puppet play performed to commemorate ASEAN’s 50th anniversary in 2017. Puppetry has existed in many forms including water puppetry of Viet Nam and shadow play of Indonesia. Under the ASEAN Puppets Exchange Programme implemented by the ASEAN Foundation, puppet artists from all ASEAN member states gathered and succeeded in creating one ASEAN story. In similar vein, as proposed in the Symposium, field hockey, which had been played in ASEAN before the western one was introduced, seems to be able to contribute to ASEAN’s unity in diversity likewise.

Against this backdrop, the Symposium on ASEAN Identity and Strengthening ASEAN-ROK Cooperation held on 22 September 2022 has served as an unprecedentedly meaningful platform. The ROK has a competitive edge in using culture, the arts, and media to foster a positive image. I hope the ROK’s soft power projection through Hallyu, Korean wave, will contribute to ASEAN’s efforts reach out to young people of the region with a view to building up a stronger sense of belonging towards an ASEAN identity.

On this occasion, I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to H.E. Dr Kao Kim Hourn, Secretary-General of ASEAN, H.E. Ekkaphab Phanthavong, Deputy Secretary-General for Socio-Cultural Community of ASEAN for unwavering efforts to mainstream the concept of ASEAN identity towards more actionable goals through this publication. Under the Korea-ASEAN Solidarity Initiative (KASI), the ROK’s new commitment to further strengthening the mutually beneficial partnership between ASEAN and Korea, we will do our utmost to contribute to shaping ASEAN identity and the eventual one ASEAN community.

LEE JANG-KEUN
Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to ASEAN

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The “ASEAN Identity: Now and Beyond” was produced by the ASEAN Secretariat through the Culture and Information Division (CID), with the support from the Mission of the Republic of Korea to ASEAN through the ASEAN-Korea Cooperation Fund (AKCF).

The publication followed the convening of the Symposium on ASEAN Identity and Strengthening ASEAN-ROK Cooperation: Now and Beyond held on 22 September 2022 at the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta, Indonesia which has received strong support from the panelists, moderators and participants as well as the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting for Culture and Arts (SOMCA) and the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting Responsible for Information (SOMRI).

Our heartfelt gratitude goes to the ASEAN-ROK Project Management Team led by Jaehwan Kwon, and including Han Nack Hoon, Amanda Yofani and Fiani Latifah in their strong support for this initiative.

The Culture and Information Division would also like to express special thanks to the contributors to this publication for their insightful views and thoughts on the way forward in amplifying ASEAN awareness, fostering ASEAN Identity and how we can mutually learn from the ASEAN-ROK relation.

The development of this publication is overseen by the editorial board comprising staff of the ASEAN Secretariat including Jonathan Tan Ghee Tiong, Patthiya Tongfueng, Romeo Arca Jr., Raymund Joe Quilop, Mary Kathleen Quiaño-Castro and Joanne Bilgera Agbisit. Further editorial support is provided by Suzanna R. Roldan, with the project and publication coordination provided by Widya Librianti and Fiori Rizki Djuwita respectively.

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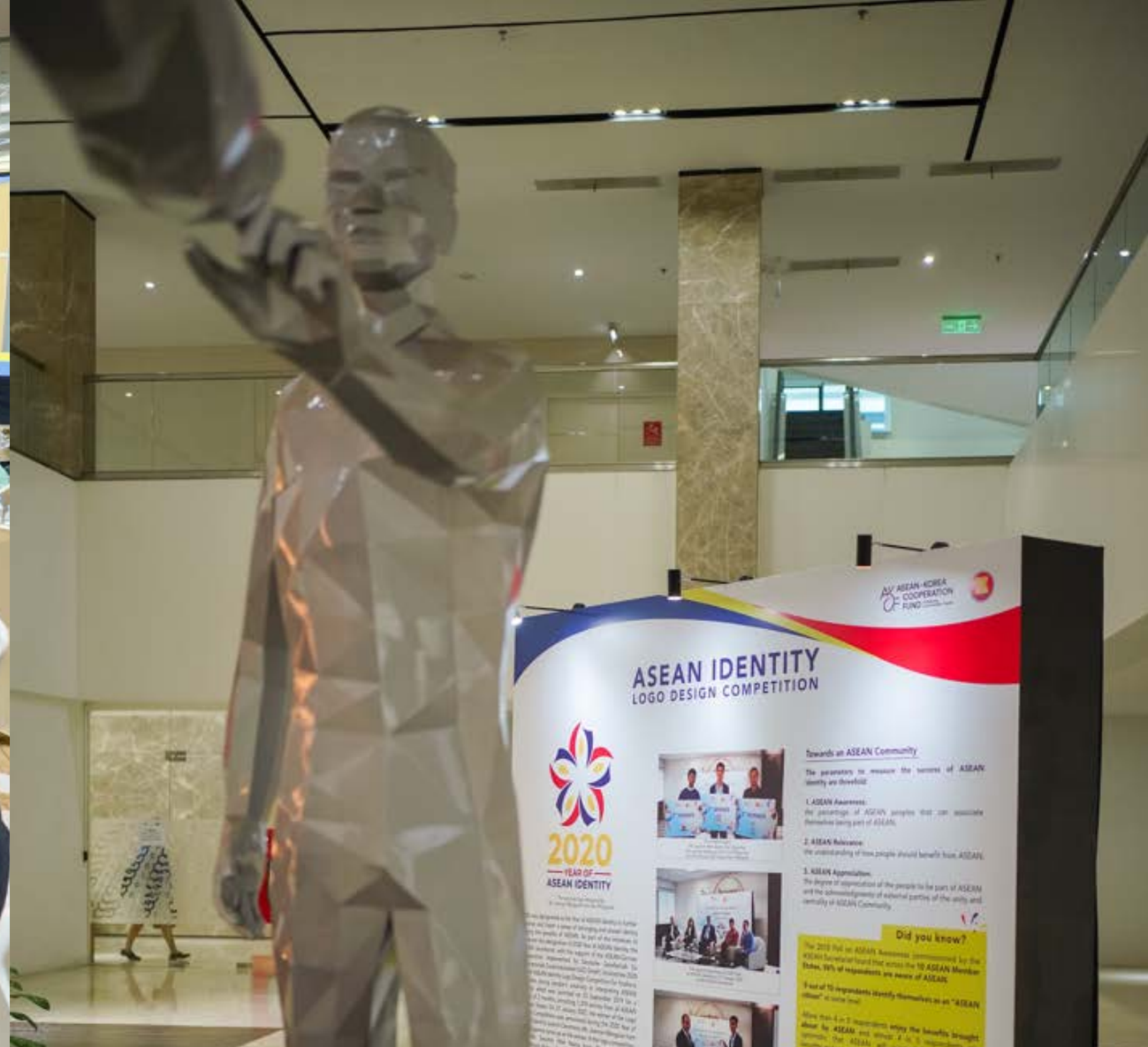
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ASEAN IDENTITY
Towards an ASEAN Community
Did you know?

THE NARRATIVE OF ASEAN IDENTITY

The Narrative of ASEAN Identity is adopted by the ASEAN Leaders at the 37th ASEAN Summit in 2020.

BACKGROUND

ASEAN has gained significant achievements since it was founded on 8 August 1967. ASEAN has established, secured and maintained peace and security in the region. ASEAN continues its work in enhancing the health, wellbeing and welfare of its peoples.

ASEAN has progressed in achieving regional integration. With the ASEAN Charter as its foundation, ASEAN is supported by three strong pillars of political and security, economy and socio-cultural communities. ASEAN has striven to build a community that is united; inclusive; resilient; sustainable; highly integrated and cohesive; competitive, innovative and dynamic; with enhanced connectivity and sectoral cooperation; and integrated with the global economy; engages and benefits all its peoples of ASEAN by 2025. ASEAN remains strongly committed to realising a rules-based, people-oriented, people-centred ASEAN of “One Vision, One Identity, One Community”.

Given its strategic location of being situated between two continents, two ocean and major sea lanes in world trade as well as ASEAN’s growing importance to regional and global trade, Southeast Asia has transformed itself into the economic epicentre of the region.

ASEAN Community

In 2005, all ASEAN Member States affirmed their commitment to ASEAN by concurring with the ASEAN motto: “One Vision. One Identity. One Community”.

The term “One Vision” is enshrined in the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and its succeeding visions. It is a top-down approach determined by ASEAN leaders through extensive consultations with people in the region, an explicit push factor which implicitly contains visions, goals and targets that the ASEAN Community seeks to achieve by 2025.

The term “One Community” refers to the ASEAN Community which was formally launched in 2015 consisting of three pillars: the ASEAN Political Security Community (APSC), the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC), and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC).

> Cambridge dictionary (2020) defines community as people living in particular area or people who are considered as a unit because of their common interests, social group, or nationality.

In order to strengthen and seal the bond among ASEAN peoples, ASEAN needs to strengthen its Community. There is an urgent necessity to find common ground between national and regional interests. In a Community, the mindset of common beliefs and common goals are embedded in the soul of the ASEAN people. In order to achieve this, ASEAN will have to develop through a more inclusive and participatory process involving grass root societies. Only then, will the ASEAN Community achieve an optimal equilibrium to progress together.

ASEAN Identity shall strengthen the ASEAN Community. ASEAN Identity will enhance common values with a higher degree of we-feeling and sense of belonging and sharing in all the benefits of regional integration.

PURPOSE

This narrative shall serve as the basis for ASEAN Identity, a terminology familiar to ASEAN members, as it is mentioned and reflected in various outcome documents of ASEAN and ASEAN project activities. This narrative reminds ASEAN Member States of who we are, where we come from, and where we are heading, both as an organisation as well as a community. This narrative may also become a reference to enrich discourses and intellectual exercises which will further manifest in the community. And most importantly, it is a down-to-earth narrative where its implementation process will embrace all ASEAN citizens especially those at the grass root levels in ways to would better enable them make ASEAN more relevant in their lives, as well as allow them to reap the benefits of being part of the ASEAN Community.

THE ASEAN IDENTITY

What is ASEAN Identity?

ASEAN Identity is a process of social construct defined by balanced combination of “Constructed Values” and “Inherited Values” that will strengthen the ASEAN Community.

Constructed Values

Constructed values are defined as values that of a group of people or nations who associate themselves with, as a product of active and deliberate intentions in order to develop an allegiance with certainmindsets to achieve a specific objective of a community.

ASEAN’s values converged and developed during the post-colonial era. During this period, the acculturation process was nourished by new values and ideas, against the backdrop of a new level of security, individual freedom and social welfare, as well as a new concept of growth, equality and competition. These planted the embryo of the mindset formation and the way of thinking which later developed and became part of the modern ASEAN people.

The ASEAN Identity was cognizant with the establishment of ASEAN in 1967. In the midst of the Cold War, and through the Bangkok Declaration, ASEAN envisioned to achieve economic growth, social progress and cultural development which would contribute to the establishment of regional peace, security and stability, by focusing on the aspect of cooperation among the ASEAN Member States.

ASEAN has undergone through many transformations and achieved numerous milestones through three stages of constructed values. The first stage of the constructed values is the shared political values that encompass most of the five founding countries of ASEAN stood for. After ASEAN has sustained its political objectives, it understood the importance of increasing the economic welfare of the ASEAN people. Accordingly, ASEAN progressed to the second stage of constructed values, which is the shared economic and trade benefits. After 36 years of practising the above shared values, ASEAN committed to entering the third stage as reflected in Bali Concord II in 2003 to increase its allegiance by strengthening ASEAN based on the three pillars. When the ASEAN Community was formally established in 2015, aspiring to become a People-Centred and People-Oriented Community, it entered the third stage of constructed values, focusing on the social and cultural values. These transformations were formed from the ASEAN Member States' inward and outward looking as part of the dynamic global community.

The constructed values of ASEAN Identity are reflected in Article 2 of the ASEAN Charter, regarding Principles, namely: respect, peace and security, prosperity, non-interference, consultation/dialogue, adherence to international law and rules of trade, democracy, freedom, promotion and protection of human rights, unity in diversity, inclusivity, ASEAN Centrality in conducting external relations. These principles are considered to be shared and common values. The ASEAN members agreed to uphold these principles which are identified as the ASEAN Way.

These constructed values seek to portray ASEAN as a distinct entity in a Global Community of Nations that adheres to international norms and international law; a community where every ASEAN citizen should associate themselves with the ASEAN Community and appreciate being part of the ASEAN Community that is recognised internationally.

Inherited Values

Inherited Values are defined as values that the people of Southeast Asia region ascribe to, which have been passed on for generations, through the natural process of human interaction that develops into various type of communities with much similarities.

The values shared by ASEAN member states have existed in Southeast Asian countries long before the establishment of ASEAN. All characteristics, values and shared values as well as rich traditions in Southeast Asian is part of our future vision and culture, as we progress in strengthening the ASEAN Community. A continuing process of acculturation will further enrich and strengthen the ASEAN Community.

The traditions, customs and beliefs since the pre-historic era laid the foundation of the process of an ethnic community blending in Southeast Asia. Some of the local ethnics stayed in certain areas, and some migrated for survival. Those who migrated created a chain of interaction between ethnic groups. As a result, the process of acculturation of ethnics and cultures has continued throughout history.

The introduction to the techniques and tradition of music, writing, dancing, sailing, trading, farming, rituals, ceremonies, culinary, healing practices and local traditions such as puppetry provided the opportunity to preserve these cultures. This process of interaction and acculturation continued to take place during the era of Ancient Kingdoms in Southeast Asia through alliances, marriages, barter, quests, migration, new territorial conquest, among others.

From the era of ancient kingdoms (ca 2 AD) until the age of discovery (ca 15 AD), missionaries and trading activities, especially from overseas merchants, triggered human interaction and social constructions. During that time, the Southeast Asian region was believed to be receptive to foreign cultures, such as those from China, India, the Middle East and Europe. For a certain period of time, Southeast Asia was a periphery in which its cultures were formed and originated from all various traditions, customs, beliefs and religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam.

After centuries of being at the periphery, the process of acculturation is inevitably-forming new varieties of cultures and civilisations throughout Southeast Asian countries.

This acculturation later on facilitated the evolution of a pluralistic community in Southeast Asia that is not only adaptable and resilient but also appreciates and respects diversity. This acculturation enabled values such as spiritualism, kinship, communitarian/communalism, collectivism, tolerance, humility, social harmony, solidarity, humanity, among others.

Towards an ASEAN Community

From the myriad of unique culture to exquisite culinary delights, from shared history to acquiring DNA similarity, from intensive social cultural interactions to shared traditions, these are few examples of how Southeast Asian countries are so diverse and yet shared myriad of heritages, and are connected, united as one, in ASEAN.

The ASEAN community building process is a journey. The ASEAN Identity which embarked from a historical standpoint ought to be sustainable and flexible; open to selection, adopt and adapt; while being relevant in nature to ASEAN's context.

ASEAN Identity should transcend beyond geographic proximity. The ASEAN Identity is the path to a common dream of an ASEAN Community, which is encapsulated in the smart and balanced combination of all shared values, ambition and vision.

The ASEAN Identity shall strengthen and seal the bond of ASEAN people by strengthening the ASEAN Community.

ASEAN Community is an imagined community. It is defined as the ultimate goal of ASEAN Community building process; a community that is bound by the values that drive the people of ASEAN to achieve advanced citizenship and enlightenment; a community that has a regional perspective, which manages to have a balance between national and regional interests.

In an ASEAN Community, the peoples of ASEAN would have a deeper understanding of the ASEAN Identity in their hearts and minds. At such level of embracing and understanding the ASEAN Identity, individuals across all ASEAN Member States can better identify themselves as part of "ASEAN: A Community of Opportunities for All", regardless of territorial borders and benign differences, without having to physically meet and interact with one another, aiming at regional stability and prosperity, while protecting human rights and respecting national sovereignty of each and every ASEAN Member States.

In order to be sustainable, ASEAN needs to maintain its relevance, both within ASEAN itself, and among the Global Community of Nations. People need to see and feel the benefit of ASEAN. As such, ASEAN needs to strengthen its identity by increasing ASEAN awareness and solidarity among its peoples including through the use of digital information while focusing on the appreciation of shared and common denominators, such as history, folklores, culture, tradition, food, among others.

The ASEAN Identity shall serve as catalyst to the blend of national and regional interests through economic process which in turn will strengthen overall ASEAN economic capacity which contribute to the achievement of ASEAN Community objectives, such as ASEAN commitment to reduce poverty and improve quality of life.

At the same time, diversity should be embraced and nourished as one of the unique characteristics of ASEAN, a strong investment that promotes unity in the region. The ASEAN Identity recognises that the ASEAN people including the vulnerable, are born free and equal in dignity and rights. The ASEAN Identity becomes more important because the future of ASEAN lies in the hands of the younger generation, currently one third of the ASEAN population. It is critical to nurture the ASEAN Identity by maximizing the opportunities provided by information and technological advancement as well as social media.

The ASEAN Identity will be promoted by ensuring the integration of ASEAN and its people's daily lives, by empowering epistemic communities and grass root society in the ASEAN development process, increasing people to people contacts, and emphasize in providing of ASEAN-related symbols and ideals in the community, among others.

The ASEAN Identity shall ensure the importance of multi-sectoral collaboration, public-private sector partnership, solidarity, community empowerment, as well as people's safety and wellbeing. The ASEAN Identity shall increase communication and interaction between countries in our region and ultimately accepting new changes and adopt experiences in respond to challenges and threats to form a more sustainable and resilient ASEAN Community.

The parameters to measure the success of ASEAN identity are threefold:

1. **ASEAN Awareness:** the percentage of ASEAN peoples that can associate themselves being part of ASEAN;

2. **ASEAN Relevance:** the understanding of how people should benefit from ASEAN;

3. **ASEAN Appreciation:** the degree of appreciation of the people to be part of ASEAN and the acknowledgements of external parties of the unity and centrality of ASEAN Community.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Symposium on ASEAN Identity and Strengthening ASEAN-ROK Cooperation: Now and Beyond, 22 September 2022, ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta, Indonesia

On 22 September 2022, the ASEAN Secretariat convened the Symposium on ASEAN Identity and Strengthening ASEAN-ROK Cooperation: Now and Beyond which gathered scholars, the media, creative practitioners, officials to discuss ways to foster and build ASEAN Identity. This executive summary provides the salient discussion at the Symposium.

1. ASEAN Identity in the Making

Participants at the symposium recognised the importance of building momentum and raising awareness for a shared identity. However, they also acknowledged that simply raising awareness does not automatically translate into a sense of community, citizenship, or "we-feeling" for its people.

Fostering ASEAN identity is a lengthy and deliberate process that requires deeper dialogue between ASEAN citizens and ASEAN. It is a balanced fusion of the constructed and inherited values across the region as espoused in "The Narrative of ASEAN Identity".

Participants recognised that ASEAN identity is a work-in-progress given there is no singular definition or framing of ASEAN Identity, and that it remains an ongoing conversation among ASEAN and ASEAN citizens. It calls for collaborations among as many actors (individuals and institutions from the private and public sectors).

Taking cue from how Korean culture "entered global consciousness", we may wish to enable an organic growth in shaping ASEAN identity. ASEAN peoples have been known to the process of acculturation while maintaining its values, identity and culture in a region that is culturally and uniquely diverse.

There is general agreement among the symposium participants that socio-cultural history is important for developing a sense of belonging to a regional community. Participants were cognisant that the collective response to the turbulent period preceding ASEAN's establishment in 1967 should be remembered, and not to be forgotten, disrespected, or taken for granted.

2. Lessons from Hallyu

Symposium participants exchanged views and thoughts in creating an ASEAN-wave, and the lessons to be drawn from the Hallyu. Some participants saw huge potential for culture from Southeast Asian countries to be globally known beyond the region. Promotion of cultural exchanges would increase the opportunities for an ASEAN wave to flourish. Corporations that organise and hold cultural events hosted by South Korea and Southeast Asian countries and in public and private sectors will be necessary to make an ASEAN-wave a reality.

One suggestion was to have more “intra-Asia referencing” which can be done through co-production activities and exchanges of ideas and experience in Southeast Asia in order for the storytelling to showcase more ASEAN experience. Meanwhile, the efforts should come from collaborative efforts by governments and the industry. It would be critical that government promotes an enabling regulatory environment to realise full potential of creativity and freedom of expression.

Participants also underscored the importance of youth engagement to amplify ASEAN awareness and foster ASEAN Identity. To target the youth, it would be important to get creative in terms of outreach to the masses. For example, Hallyu has effectively leveraged digital technology to popularise the k-culture especially among the digitally-savvy youth.

Other participants advocated for more cultural exchanges, and suggested that Korean people could use more opportunities to know and understand ASEAN cultures, and vice versa. Some possibilities for cooperation were sports matches allowing fans supporting the same team to have a sense of imagined community or solidarity, or promoting ASEAN identity through local food from the region.

Participants further noted that for an ASEAN wave to work, the quality matters. People must be naturally curious or attracted to it because it is something unique, and that it pushes boundaries. The authenticity of ASEAN content needs to be there. It should not be watered down or foreigner-friendly. Creating quality ASEAN products could instil pride in ASEAN identity. Participants further noted that the success of K-wave was driven by the desire for perfection. Huge intensity, huge rivalry, huge competition, and desire to be perfect could serve as positive forces to ensure quality.

3. Way Forward

Ensuring that ordinary people know about ASEAN is key to creating a deeper sense of belonging. The media is instrumental in building awareness, particularly among the youth. To cultivate a sense of belonging for ASEAN citizens, people need to be able to see tangible benefits, many of which are economic-based. There is a strong opportunity to leverage the influence of the media industry in fostering ASEAN identity that doesn't solely depend on promoting economic benefits.

Korea is a prime example of how one country has successfully shared its culture globally through dramas, music, and food. With the rise of streaming platforms such as Netflix and YouTube, the dissemination of media on a global scale has become readily accessible. Some participants shared that through content on these platforms, they have been able to identify similarities between ROK's culture and theirs. Identifying and visualising these affinities between countries engenders a sense of regional belonging.

Participants further discussed creative means of promoting ASEAN identity. Music can transcend language barriers and is an engaging way to share culture. A suggestion was to host a songfest, similar to Eurovision, that could promote original songs of national and cultural significance, and enable greater collaborative efforts between young artists from across the region.

Participants also believed that strong collaboration among countries, ASEAN organisations, government and private media is the way forward to address the many challenges in cultivating and sharing ASEAN identity. It is a necessary and critical step in attaining the goals of the community and pushing for a stronger ASEAN.

Participants underscored the need for more engaging contents to amplify ASEAN awareness, including contents that narrate how and why ASEAN was established, and how ASEAN's purpose, aims, goals aligned with country member states' aspirations. Regional competitions and events such as music, dance or art festivals may foster greater regional solidarity and deepen the regional sense of belonging.

As a diverse region with a rich multitude of languages and dialects, the exclusive use of English on official ASEAN websites and media is a barrier toward wider audience engagement. Though translating into local languages increases production costs, with the rise of digital platforms, other venues can be explored to share information outside traditional media.

In view of the importance of education in playing a pivotal role to amplify ASEAN awareness, participants suggested the inclusion of ASEAN history in school curricula at an early age so as to imbue an awareness of ASEAN. To sustain awareness, the content has ought to be refreshed and updated regularly to engage young students. Equally useful is to capture oral histories, biographies of leaders and ordinary citizens in the region on their views about ASEAN developments, and how ASEAN has benefited them as an individual, as part of community and society.

ASEAN EFFORTS IN FOSTERING ASEAN IDENTITY AND ASEAN-REPUBLIC OF KOREA'S COOPERATION IN AMPLIFYING ASEAN AWARENESS

A strong regional identity among ASEAN peoples is one of the foundations of ASEAN integration. ASEAN's motto mentions "one identity" alongside with "one vision" and "one community", which together define the essence of ASEAN as a unified region. However, efforts to promote a regional identity as heterogeneous as Southeast Asia have not been without challenges. Although ASEAN's diversity is a major source of strength, it can also be considered as an obstacle in nurturing a sense of shared identity. Based on ASEAN perception surveys, there is still much work ahead of us that we need to do in order to inspire the peoples of the region to identify themselves as ASEAN citizens, as we work toward the ASEAN Community Vision 2025.

Narrative of ASEAN Identity

Initiated under Indonesia's Chairmanship of the ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Culture and the Arts (AMCA) in 2018-2020, the Narrative of ASEAN Identity is adopted by the ASEAN Leaders at the 37th ASEAN Summit in 2020.

The envisaged ASEAN Identity is cast as a narrative, instead of a definition per se. This is to suggest that ASEAN Identity is a narrative that is evolving, and a work-in-progress that shall be constantly informed and shaped by the policymakers and peoples in the region.

The Narrative of ASEAN Identity regards ASEAN Identity as "...a process of social construct defined by balanced combination of Constructed Values and Inherited Values that will strengthen the ASEAN Community."

Constructed Values

ASEAN has undergone through three stages of constructed values with many transformations and numerous milestones:

1) the first stage is the shared political values that encompass most of the five founding countries of ASEAN stood for;

2) the second stage is the shared economic and trade benefits. After ASEAN has sustained its political objectives, it understood the importance of increasing the economic welfare of the ASEAN people; and

3) the third stage is reflected in Bali Concord II in 2003 to increase its allegiance by strengthening ASEAN based on the three pillars. When the ASEAN Community was formally established in 2015, aspiring to become a People-Centred and People-Oriented Community, it entered the third stage of constructed values, focusing on the social and cultural values.

Inherited Values

The values shared by ASEAN member states have existed in Southeast Asian countries long before the establishment of ASEAN. All characteristics, values and shared values as well as rich traditions in Southeast Asian is part of our future vision and culture, as we progress in strengthening the ASEAN Community.

The traditions, customs and beliefs since the pre-historic era laid the foundation of the process of an ethnic community blending in Southeast Asia. With migration, a chain of interaction between groups were created leading to the process of acculturation of ethnics and cultures throughout history. This process continued as Southeast Asia Ancient Kingdoms engaged through alliances, marriages, barter, quests, migration, new territorial conquest, among others. With trading activities, especially from overseas merchants, the Southeast Asian region was receptive to foreign cultures.

Southeast Asia was a periphery in which its cultures were formed and originated from all various traditions, customs, beliefs and religions. After centuries of being at the periphery, the process of acculturation is inevitably forming new varieties of cultures and civilisations throughout Southeast Asia. This acculturation later on facilitated the evolution of a pluralistic community in Southeast Asia that is not only adaptable and resilient but also appreciates and respects diversity.

Towards an ASEAN Community

The parameters to measure the success of ASEAN identity are threefold:

1. **ASEAN Awareness:** the percentage of ASEAN peoples that can associate themselves being part of ASEAN;
2. **ASEAN Relevance:** the understanding of how people should benefit from ASEAN;
3. **ASEAN Appreciation:** the degree of appreciation of the people to be part of ASEAN and the acknowledgements of external parties of the unity and centrality of ASEAN Community.

Did you know?

- The 2018 Poll on ASEAN Awareness commissioned by the ASEAN Secretariat found that across the 10 ASEAN Member States, 96% of respondents are aware of ASEAN.
- 9 out of 10 respondents identify themselves as an “ASEAN citizen” at some level.
- More than 4 in 5 respondents enjoy the benefits brought about by ASEAN and almost 4 in 5 respondents are optimistic that ASEAN will successfully bring shared benefits and prosperity to the region in the future.

ASEAN Identity Logo Design Competition

2020 was designated as the Year of ASEAN Identity to further develop and foster a sense of belonging and shared identity among the peoples of ASEAN. As part of the initiative to celebrate the designation of 2020 Year of ASEAN Identity, the ASEAN Secretariat, with the support of the ASEAN-German Cooperation implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, initiated the 2020 Year of ASEAN Identity Logo Design Competition for Youths to stimulate young people's creativity in interpreting ASEAN identity, which was launched on 23 September 2019 for a period of 2 months, attracting 1,378 entries from all ASEAN Member States.

On 21 January 2022, the winner of the Logo Design Competition was announced during the 2020 Year of ASEAN Identity Launch Ceremony. Mr. Joemari Manguiat from the Philippines came up as the winner of the logo competition, while Mr. Swumm Htet Naing from Myanmar and Mr. Mohammad Firdaus from Malaysia were the first and second runner ups, respectively. The winning logo symbolises a blooming flower that represents youths, cultural diversity, peace, and economic stability.

The winning logo designed by Mr. Joemari Manguiat from the Philippines

The 2nd and 3rd winners' logos designed by Mr. Swumm Htet Naing from Myanmar and Mohd. Firdaus Abd Hamid from Malaysia.

(From left to right) Mr. Swumm Htet Naing from Myanmar, Mr. Joemari Manguiat from the Philippines, and Mr. Mohammad Firdaus from Malaysia

Former DSG of ASCC, H.E. Kung Phoak (left), congratulating Mr. Joemari Manguiat as the Winner of the Logo Competition

The Launch Ceremony of 2020 Year of ASEAN Identity on 21 January 2020 at the ASEAN Secretariat

ASEAN Communication Master Plan II (2018 – 2025), ACMP II

To engender a collective sense of pride in ASEAN and to further amplify the we-feeling, the **ASEAN Communication Master Plan II 2018-2025 (ACMP II)** – adopted by the 22nd ASEAN Coordinating Council, and noted by the ASEAN Leaders at the 33rd ASEAN Summit in 2018 – presents an overarching message of **"ASEAN: A Community of Opportunities for All".**

The ACMP II provides the framework to communicate messages about the organisation, development and vision of ASEAN and the ASEAN Community to key audiences, including local communities of ASEAN Member States (AMS), women and children, youth, governments, businesses, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), influencers, media and global audiences.

To achieve this, ACMP II customises message houses for ASEAN and each ASEAN Community Pillar and identifies target audiences, recognising rural-urban divides and the corresponding communication channels, communications strategies, and tactics to reach them.

A wide spectrum of tactics is leveraged across traditional media, electronic and social media, and in-market events that can be implemented at the AMS level as well as ASEAN-wide.

ACMP II Overarching Message House

We will realise a rules-based, people-oriented, people-centred ASEAN Community, where people enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms, higher quality of life and the benefits of community-building, reinforced by a sense of togetherness and common identity.

Key Message

ASEAN has its own identity and we are stronger as an ASEAN Community than as a single country.

Proof Points

- As a community we have an enhanced role and voice internationally.
- As resilient Community we help each other adapt and respond to social and economic vulnerabilities, disasters and climate change.
- By focusing collectively on political, security, economic, and socio-cultural issues we can positively impact the lives of all people in ASEAN.

Key Message

Greater integration brings more opportunities for everyone.

Proof Points

- An integrated regional economy supports sustained high economic growth by increasing trade investment and job creation
- As inclusive community we promote high quality of life and equitable access to opportunities for all.
- Integrated economies across ASEAN provide more opportunities for our citizens and help narow the development gap.

Key Message

Peace and stability are some of the greatest benefits of the ASEAN Community

Proof Points

- For more than 50 years, ASEAN has helped to maintain peace among member states.
- Peace enables economic growth and development to happen rapidly, benefiting everyone in ASEAN.
- A stable community enables us to respond quickly to challenges both internally and externally.
- As a region we resolve differences and disputes by peaceful means.

ACMP II In Implementation

“Faces of ASEAN: Opportunities for All” is a production and airing of 3-5 minutes video materials or infomercials to raise public awareness of ASEAN and to present solid proof points on how ASEAN provides opportunities for its people and the positive impact it can make on their lives.

ASEAN Member States have also developed their respective national communication plans in line with the ACMP II and its key messages with the support of the ASEAN Cultural Fund (ACF) under the initiative “Promotion of ACMP II in ASEAN Member States”.

ACMP II Communication and Outreach

With the support from Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the ASEAN Secretariat (led by the Culture and Information Division in joint efforts with the Community Relations Division) has launched an immersive suite of ACMP II communication and outreach between 2020 – 2021.

These products included the publication, **“In Conversations with ASEAN Citizens”, ASEAN 101 Videos, ASEAN Champion Podcasts and Webtoons.**

ASEAN-ROK Cooperation in the Culture and the Information Sectors

The ASEAN Secretariat, through the Culture and Information Division (CID) is supporting our Senior Officials Meeting for Culture and the Arts (SOMCA) and Senior Officials Meeting Responsible for Information (SOMRI) in collaborating with the Republic of Korea (ROK) on an exciting spectrum of impactful activities to promote cultural and people-to-people exchanges that exemplified the best of ASEAN and the ROK.

KONNECT ASEAN

KONNECT ASEAN – The ASEAN-ROK Art and Culture Programme is designed to support and promote Asian visual arts using different platforms that included exhibitions and educational outreach. KONNECT ASEAN brings together early-career arts professionals from across ASEAN and ROK to shape the contemporary art world together.

Throughout 2020-2022, KONNECT ASEAN has successfully implemented 18 activities, attracted 131,289 exhibition visitors, empowered 239 artists, engaged 5,783 members of the public through webinars. More programmes are expected to be rolled out in 2023.

ARISE: KONNECT ASEAN Contemporary Print Show, ASEAN Culture House, Busan, Korea, November 2021 – February 2022

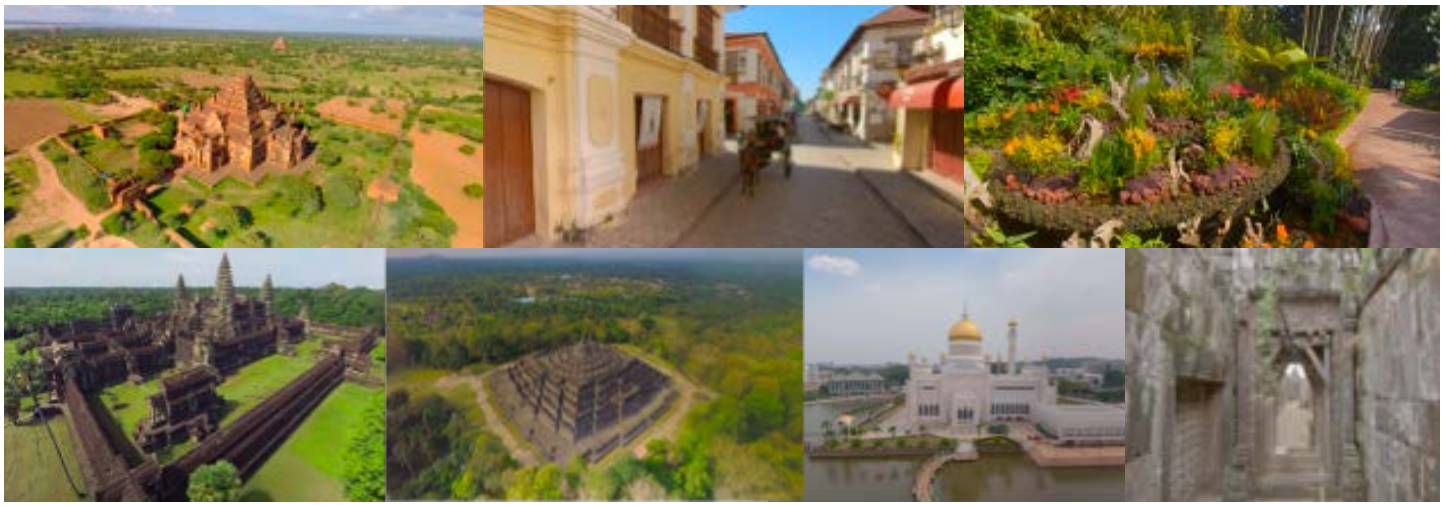
Stories Across Rising Lands, Museum MACAN , Jakarta, Indonesia, March – December 2021

Korean Pavilion,
Jogja Biennale 2021

Digital Heritage Virtual Reality Contents of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in ASEAN

To honour and preserve ASEAN's rich and diverse cultural heritage, ASEAN and the Republic of Korea are collaborating to produce digital heritage contents in the format of 4K Video, Interactive Virtual Reality Video and 360 HMD Virtual Reality Video of UNESCO World Heritage Site in each ASEAN Member State.

The videos formed the immersive virtual reality experience zone at the ASEAN Cultural House (Busan), ASEAN Cultural Centre (Bangkok) and social media channels.



ASEAN-Korea Music Festival

Hosted by the Korean broadcasting company KBS and supported by the ASEAN-Korea Cooperation Fund, the ASEAN-Korea Music Festival, or ROUND, is a series of music festivals showcasing musicians from ASEAN and South Korea.

2 ROUND Festivals were held successfully in hybrid mode on 6 December 2020 and 9 January 2022. The ROUND 2020 received the 2021 Digital Content Award at the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union for its innovative use of online communication technologies to engage the audience. The 2023 ROUND Festival was held at the Beach City International Stadium Ancol in Jakarta on 21-22 October 2023.

Among the musicians who performed in ROUND were Jambinai, ADOY, Peppertones, Jamie, and Elaine (from Korea), and Ben&Ben, SB19, Two Popetorn, Barasuara, and Vũ. & Skylines Beyond Our Reach (from ASEAN Member States).

Ben&Ben from the Philippines performed at the ROUND 2020

The ROUND Forums were convened to gather key figures from the music industries across ASEAN and Korea to discuss issues related to doing business in music

ADOY from Korea performed at ROUND 2021

Audience from ASEAN countries and Korea joining ROUND 2021 virtually

ASEAN-ROK Film Community Programme

ASEAN-ROK Film Community Programme is a longstanding initiative since the first edition held in 2012 to promote the ASEAN-ROK film industry. The initiative is organised by the Busan Film Commission and Busan Asian Film School, with film industry-supporting agencies from ASEAN Member States who take turns annually to co-organise the event in ASEAN and the ROK.

The initiative comprises a Film Leaders Incubator (FLY) Workshop – a two-week filmmaking workshop for young and aspiring film talents from the ASEAN Member States and the Republic of Korea to develop two short film scripts and produce the short films under the supervision and instruction of established Asian Filmmakers. The FLY Film Lab – an ASEAN-ROK film script lab – featured 11 selected films in development from the ASEAN Member States and the Republic of Korea.

The Graduation Ceremony of the ASEAN-ROK FLY 2019 in Bandar Seri Begawan

ASEAN-ROK FLY Film Lab 2019 in Busan, ROK

The ASEAN filmmakers doing a shooting for their short film in Bandar Seri Begawan

AMPLIFYING ASEAN AWARENESS & FOSTERING ASEAN IDENTITY: A COLLECTION OF THINK PIECES

Constructing ASEAN Identity: Challenges and the Way Forward

Prof Dewi Fortuna Anwar

Forming an ASEAN identity will be a challenging and long-term process

In the past, it was often said that ASEAN makes haste slowly. This once popular saying is not heard too often now, when ASEAN has to be constantly on the alert to the fast changing strategic environments and respond accordingly. In the matter of constructing ASEAN Identity, however, ASEAN has been making haste even more slowly, reflecting the difficulties of the task at hand. From a loose regional association established in 1967 to promote good neighbour relations, ASEAN's vision has slowly evolved to become an integrated, peaceful and stable community with shared prosperity, to be achieved through the three ASEAN Community pillars: ASEAN Political-Security Community, ASEAN Economic Community and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community agreed upon in 2003. While celebrating the formal establishment of the ASEAN Community at the 27th ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur in 2015, the ASEAN leaders pledged their resolve to realise a rules-based, people-oriented, people-centred ASEAN of "One Vision, One Identity, One Community". Yet the terms of reference for forming ASEAN Identity, "The Narrative of ASEAN Identity" was only adopted at the 37th ASEAN Summit in 2020.[i]

Forming an ASEAN identity will be a challenging and long-term process. ASEAN's diversity cannot be exaggerated as the ten – soon to be eleven – member states have several major differences, including historical experiences, religions, political systems, levels of economic development and strategic outlooks. In fact, internally many of the ASEAN Member States are also very diverse with different racial and ethnic groups, religious beliefs and ideological orientations contending for allegiances. In many of the ASEAN countries, nation and state building is still an ongoing process while national identities are often still contested. It is, therefore, not surprising that ASEAN was initially established as a loose regional association without any supranational authority, as each member state jealously guarded its respective national sovereignty and identity.

Hence, the purpose of ASEAN is fundamentally different from that of the European Union. From the outset, the process of regional integration in Western Europe has been aimed at creating a supranational regional body with corresponding authorities to make rules and ensure compliance in wide-ranging areas, as well as erase the more virulent expressions of nationalism that had led to two world wars.

Unlike in the well-established Western European countries where nationalism is often associated with intolerance against outsiders, in the newly independent countries in Southeast Asia, nationalism is equated with patriotism necessary to forge a strong sense of nationhood and national identity from disparate sub-national entities. Forming an ASEAN Identity when most national focus is still primarily turned inward among the ASEAN Member States is clearly no easy task.

Forming an ASEAN Identity when most national focus is still primarily turned inward among the ASEAN Member States is clearly no easy task

The Importance of Forming the ASEAN Community and Identity

Changing external and internal environments have gradually pushed ASEAN Member States to develop a more integrated regional organisation with the ultimate goal of forming a holistic ASEAN Community. The move to develop the ASEAN Economic Community was triggered by the need to make the region more attractive and competitive in the face of increasing external competition marked by the emergence of large trading blocs and newly open economies after the end of the Cold War. The Asian financial crisis that led to political and security crises in many parts of the region, particularly in Indonesia which saw the collapse of the authoritarian Suharto regime and the country's painful transition to democracy, increased awareness of the importance of political reform and a more participatory form of governance based on the rule of law, democratic principles and respect for human rights.

ASEAN's continuing relevance and advancement in the face of both internal and external challenges and expectations hinge on the success of the ASEAN Community project

Security challenges from both traditional and non-traditional threats have also been on the rise. The return of great power competition makes it even more important to strengthen ASEAN unity, autonomy and centrality in dealing with external powers. The ASEAN Political-Security Community which would ensure peace, not only between states but also within states, is regarded as a necessary complement to the ASEAN Economic Community. At the same time, economic and political development would not be sufficient without enhancing social and cultural interaction among the peoples of ASEAN, thus giving rise to the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community pillar. Incrementally, ASEAN has, therefore, increasingly committed itself to become a more integrated community that is people-centred and people-oriented, which entails developing a common vision, common values and a common identity. ASEAN's continuing relevance and advancement in the face of both internal and external challenges and expectations hinge on the success of the ASEAN Community project.

"The Narrative of ASEAN Identity" states that "ASEAN Identity is a process of social construct defined by a balanced combination of 'Constructed Values' and 'Inherited Values' that will strengthen the ASEAN Community. *Constructed Values* are the products of active and deliberate intentions to achieve a specific objective, while

"*Inherited Values* are those that have been passed on for generations through the natural process of natural interaction." The Narrative further states that the "ASEAN identity is the path to a common dream of an ASEAN Community" which is "an imagined community that is bound by the values that drive the people of ASEAN to achieve advanced citizenship and enlightenment; a community that has a regional perspective, which manages to have a balance between national and regional interests."

The rich inherited values found in Southeast Asia, which are both very diverse and yet also having distinctive characteristics that distinguish Southeast Asia from other sub-regions, form the social and cultural basis to ASEAN identity formation. Southeast Asia has always been at the crossroads of different and at times contending cultural, religious and civilisational influences, yet the peoples in this region have been adept at adopting and adapting the various influences to the local context. Diversity is a natural condition in Southeast Asia, marked by the regional characteristics of openness, tolerance, pluralism and inclusiveness. These characteristics need to remain at the core of ASEAN identity. However, if the peoples of this diverse region are serious about constructing an ASEAN identity, considerable efforts must also be made to construct and sustain a meaningful unity that can truly transcend the diversity.

The rich inherited values found in Southeast Asia, which are both very diverse and yet also having distinctive characteristics that distinguish Southeast Asia from other sub-regions, form the social and cultural basis to ASEAN identity formation

The Way Forward

"The Narrative of ASEAN Identity" states that "the constructed values of ASEAN Identity are reflected in Article 2 of the ASEAN Charter regarding Principles, namely: respect, peace and security, prosperity, non-interference, consultation/dialogue, adherence to international law and rules of trade, democracy, freedom, promotion and protection of human rights, unity in diversity, inclusivity. These principles are considered to be shared and common values. The ASEAN members agreed to uphold these principles which are identified as the ASEAN Way".

While all of these principles are equally important and should be implemented in a holistic manner, in practice a number of these principles are often in tension with each other, making the progress of forming a cohesive ASEAN Identity even more challenging. The adoption of the ASEAN Charter in 2007, which places great importance in the rule of law, democracy, constitutional government and protection of human rights clearly indicates that ASEAN will no longer tolerate flagrant violations of these universal principles. Yet upholding democracy and protecting human rights have remained a challenge in Southeast Asia while ASEAN Member States continue to regard the principle of non-interference in each other's internal affairs as sacrosanct.

To remain relevant as well as maintain ASEAN Centrality and international credibility, ASEAN clearly needs to demonstrate its ability to deal with the crises affecting the region. While respecting the principle of non-interference in each other's internal affairs, which is also enshrined in the UN Charter, ASEAN must also strengthen its identity as a rules-based and progressive regional entity that respects universal values.

Hence, as part of constructing ASEAN Identity there is a need to strengthen the regional institution and adjust the decision-making by consensus to enable ASEAN to take corrective measures against unacceptable violations of fundamental principles committed by an ASEAN Member State. Going forward, there is a need to strengthen ASEAN's institutional authority and capacity to enforce the rules that all the member states have agreed upon by inserting the necessary clauses in the ASEAN Charter, which had in fact been included in the original draft of the charter.

...ASEAN must also strengthen its identity as a rules-based and progressive regional entity that respects universal values

"The Narrative of ASEAN Identity" states that the parameters to measure the success of ASEAN identity are threefold, namely ASEAN Awareness, ASEAN Relevance and ASEAN Appreciation. To increase the people's awareness ASEAN needs to be much more visible, among others through the widespread use of the ASEAN logo, including putting the ASEAN brand on various activities involving ASEAN Member States outside the ASEAN context, such as when participating in a UN peace-keeping force. Enhancing public knowledge and understanding of ASEAN through education and dissemination of information in a continuous manner, adjusted to the intended targets, is also necessary to improve ASEAN Awareness.

ASEAN Relevance can only be earned when ASEAN shows that it has a meaningful role to play on issues that matter to both the internal and external stakeholders

ASEAN Relevance can only be earned when ASEAN shows that it has a meaningful role to play on issues that matter to both the internal and external stakeholders. ASEAN's ability to deal effectively with crises affecting the region, whether it is a political and humanitarian crisis, as well as other non-traditional threats to security such as pandemic and climate change, economic challenges or geo-political rivalry and other traditional threats to security, will determine the extent of ASEAN relevance in particular areas. ASEAN Appreciation will grow when both the peoples in the region and external stakeholders can see that ASEAN contributes to, and is in fact indispensable, to the peace, stability and prosperity of Southeast Asia, the wider Indo-Pacific region and beyond. Therefore, ensuring that ASEAN truly matters is key to the success of constructing ASEAN Identity in the face of so many challenges and centrifugal forces.

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Foreign Perceptions of the Korean Wave

Prof Doobo Shim

With the growing popularity of the Korean Wave (often called the Hallyu), or "the global popularity of K-Pop, K-Drama, Korean cuisine, and others" there has been a surge of misinformed and often malicious reports about it. Some reports claim that the colourful pop culture from the “authoritarian” South Korea would not be possible without state support, while others suggest that South Korea's export-hungry government is sending its young people to their deaths. Such reports have influenced many students studying abroad to assume that the Korean Wave was created by the Korean government to promote the country.

...the assertion that Hallyu is a state-manipulated cultural phenomenon is both factually inaccurate and indicative of a fundamental misunderstanding of culture

In this environment, universities in Southeast Asia and Europe are publishing theses on "Korean Wave and Korean cultural imperialism". However, some may question whether the use of the term "cultural imperialism" is fair when applied to the Korean Wave. After all, this term was used by South Korea and other countries to criticise the United States in the 1970s and 80s.

While there are gray areas when it comes to the authenticity of some misconceptions about the Korean Wave, the assertion that Hallyu is a state-manipulated cultural phenomenon is both factually inaccurate and indicative of a fundamental misunderstanding of culture. Such claims were previously made between 2005 and 2009 when the Hallyu craze was only prevalent in certain regions of Asia. During an international conference where I presented a paper on the Korean Wave, I was astonished to find that scholars from China and Southeast Asia attributed the Hallyu to meticulous planning by the South Korean government.

Of course, the state provides administrative support for the protection and promotion of its cultural industries. This is not unique to South Korea. Even in the United States, a country that epitomises market liberalism, the State Department and other relevant ministries provided various levels of support for the international spread of Hollywood films as early as the 1930s. Since the 1980s, the U.S. Trade Representative has prioritised the opening of film markets in negotiations between countries to open overseas markets. In response, many countries around the world, including South Korea, decided that it was no longer feasible to protect their films through screen quotas. Feeling threatened by the U.S. push to open up their cultural markets, they developed measures to promote the film industry with the goal of protecting their domestic markets. In fact, every country has some level of cultural industry policy. Movies have always been at the centre of government cultural policies because they are a bastion of national cultural transmission.

In South Korea, on the other hand, popular songs were in the realm of indifference. In 1975, Park Chung-Hee's regime invoked Emergency Measure No. 9, which led to the arrest and imprisonment of dissidents, including many singers. Rock and folk singers, who were at the centre of youth culture at the time were banned and the stage was gradually taken over by ballad and dance singers. Isn't it ironic that the government's indifference and suppression laid the foundation for K-pop's global success today?

...the Korean Wave abroad is largely due to the organic growth of Korean pop culture, rather than a top-down effort to promote it

Given South Korea's long-standing history as a cultural importer, it would have been difficult for the country to imagine, let alone plan, the international cultural phenomenon that emerged in the late 1990s known as the Korean Wave. It is important to recognise that the Korean Wave abroad is largely due to the organic growth of Korean pop culture, rather than a top-down effort to promote it.

To comprehend the rise of the Korean Wave, it is crucial to examine the shifts in both internal and external conditions during the 1990s. Internally, the informatisation policies of the Korean media led to the establishment of numerous cable television channels and local broadcasting stations. In the past, ambitious young individuals would typically seek employment in conglomerates, but they began to enter the fields of media and broadcasting. As the 1980s witnessed the growth of the visual generation, many skilled individuals also joined newly established companies related to broadcasting and video production. The innovative ideas and passion of the new generation fueled the vitality of the Korean audiovisual industry and fostered a creative atmosphere. In the realm of popular music, DJs and dancers who were previously derogatorily referred to as "club performers" transitioned into dance singers and made appearances on television. They delighted audiences with dance music influenced by foreign sounds such as R&B, hip-hop, punk, and Euro disco. Additionally, young musicians who had studied abroad or were of Korean descent returned home to showcase new sensibilities and trends. Korea was no longer the same as its past. The political democratisation led to the relaxation or abolition of censorship systems that hindered the development of the Korean media industry, thus enabling the production of high-quality content by promoting creative freedom. The public, based on their heightened discernment resulting from the spread of new media technologies and liberalisation of overseas travel, demanded a more sophisticated culture. In response, the industry competitively produced more sophisticated content both in terms of entertainment and aesthetics.

External factors also played a crucial role, such as the launch of Hong Kong's Star TV satellite television in the early 1990s, as well as the opening of media markets across Asia. The economic crisis that struck the region in the late 1990s provided an "opportunity" for Korean content, which was less expensive than other foreign programs and hence, was more appealing to broadcasters in Hong Kong, China, Viet Nam, Taiwan, and other countries. In the 21st century, the widespread availability of digital media, over-the-top (OTT) connectivity, and the internet has further driven the growth of the Korean Wave.

Simply having more access to Korean content does not necessarily translate into widespread popularity. The success of Korean content depends on how well it resonates with local audiences. However, audiences' tastes and preferences are constantly evolving and unpredictable, making it difficult to anticipate what will become popular. It is therefore a misguided assumption to suggest that the Korean government can control and manipulate the global popularity of Hallyu by simply pushing the phenomenon. Despite this, it is important to examine how such claims are perpetuated and amplified.

The success of Korean content depends on how well it resonates with local audiences

First, some countries still report on South Korea with preconceived notions that it is under an authoritarian regime, despite its progress towards democracy. These biases are often reinforced by appearances of K-pop singers in South Korean tourism promotional materials or by BTS accompanying President Moon Jae-in's speech to the UN General Assembly in September 2021. However, it is not uncommon for countries to appoint their celebrities as ambassadors for national events. For instance, in Japan, the idol group Arashi was appointed as a "Goodwill Ambassador for the Year of Promoting Cultural and Sports Exchange between Japan and China" in 2020. In a similar vein, the 2012 London Olympics featured a special performance by the iconic British singer, Paul McCartney, and the closing ceremony featured a number of other iconic British singers, including George Michael, the Spice Girls, The Who, and Ed Sheeran. During a Hallyu seminar hosted by the University of the Philippines in 2021, a foreign professor moderating the discussion claimed that "South Korea controls all stages of pop culture production and distribution, to the point where the government merged its broadcasting stations in 1980." However, the Korea of today is vastly different from that of 1980, with South Korea being ranked among the top 20 democracies in the world by a major international organisation. Nonetheless, scholars and journalists hailing from countries where media is government-controlled tend to view the Korean Wave as a mirror image of their own situation, and in doing so, they overstate the South Korean government's control over the phenomenon.

Second, the Korean government's role in promoting the Hallyu phenomenon warrants closer examination. Initially, both the public and officials within the culture ministry were skeptical of the Korean Wave, with media reports on the phenomenon in China and Taiwan beginning in the late 1990s. However, after being informed about the phenomenon through various channels, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA), the government recognised the potential for the Korean Wave to improve South Korea's public image, which had been tarnished by North Korean tensions and labour disputes. For instance, the Kim Dae-Jung government (1998-2003), which had just "graduated" from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) financial assistance program, was active in promoting itself to the outside world. In this regard, the Korean Wave was also promoted under the framework of the government's efforts

to cultivate the cultural industry. PR materials with this message were distributed to foreign media and government agencies through South Korean embassies and governmental organisations, influencing their perceptions of the Korean Wave. As previously noted, media outlets in countries with limited knowledge of South Korea continued to focus on the Korean Wave whenever the government announced its policies, causing scholars and opinion leaders in these countries to overstate the South Korean government's impact on the Korean Wave.

However, the Korean government's efforts to promote itself have had unintended consequences. Many countries have perceived the Korean Wave as a form of "cultural imperialism," leading to anti-Hallyu and anti-Korean sentiments. Park Jin-young, the founder of JYP Entertainment, expressed concern about this trend and suggested that the term "Hallyu" should not be used due to its nationalistic connotations. SM Entertainment's Lee Soo-man also asked the government to refrain from sponsoring Hallyu events that could give foreigners a bad impression. Ultimately, government officials involved in promoting the Korean Wave gradually responded to these criticisms and reflected on their one-way promotional efforts.

Furthermore, some Korean scholars and writers, including myself, are also partly responsible for the negative reception of the Korean Wave. Scholars from various academic fields have published papers on the Hallyu, sometimes uncritically relying on data and claims in government publications and reports without proper verification. This excessive dependence on government sources has created the misperception that policy is the main driving force behind the Korean Wave, ignoring the crucial role of its reception and distribution. Fortunately, in recent years, more studies have been conducted using various research methodologies to analyse the industrial structure and reception practices in regions where the Korean Wave is spreading.

The Korean Wave, as both a "wave" and a "flow," is bringing people, culture, and meaning back to Korea

In conclusion, it is crucial to maintain a balanced and critical approach in analysing the Korean Wave. We must pay attention to how the Korean Wave interacts with local contexts and embrace the meaning, knowledge, and worldview that it brings. The Korean Wave, as both a "wave" and a "flow," is bringing people, culture, and meaning back to Korea. This phenomenon is what I refer to as the “reflux and glocality factor” of the Korean Wave. As the Korean Wave continues to make waves worldwide, observing its development in different parts of the world presents an opportunity for Koreans and other Asians to become more sophisticated global citizens with international sensibilities. This is certainly something to be excited about.

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Moving Towards a Shared ASEAN Identity

Dr Melba Padilla Maggay

For more than half a century, ASEAN has established an institutional presence whose very stability was founded on staying clear of the proxy wars of the elephants in the region.

Against the current global drift towards cultural homogenisation, ASEAN now wants to translate its regional identity into a community built on its shared cultural and social histories. How feasible is this project given the great diversity in language, culture, and even historical responses to the experience of colonialism and current tensions in the region?

Perhaps the challenge can be summarised in this way: how do we turn the global fact of economic integration, concerns over geopolitical security, and mere accidents of contiguity into a conscious ASEAN solidarity and a sense of community that transcends loyalty to mere ethnicities and our narrow interests as nation-states?

Against the current global drift towards cultural homogenisation, ASEAN now wants to translate its regional identity into a community built on its shared cultural and social histories. How feasible is this project given the great diversity in language, culture, and even historical responses to the experience of colonialism and current tensions in the region?

This is a big question that requires some clarity on the nature of the socio-cultural realities we face today before we can begin to make an answer.

On Technology and Cultural Homogenisation

Part of the optimism over an ASEAN "imagined community" is based on the "virtual communities" being put together by and through the internet. Technology is now shaping many cultures; it is no longer just a tool but something that alters our mental habits:

"Computers don't just do things for us, they do things to us, including our ways of thinking about ourselves and other people…Computer screens are the new locations for our fantasies, both erotic and intellectual."

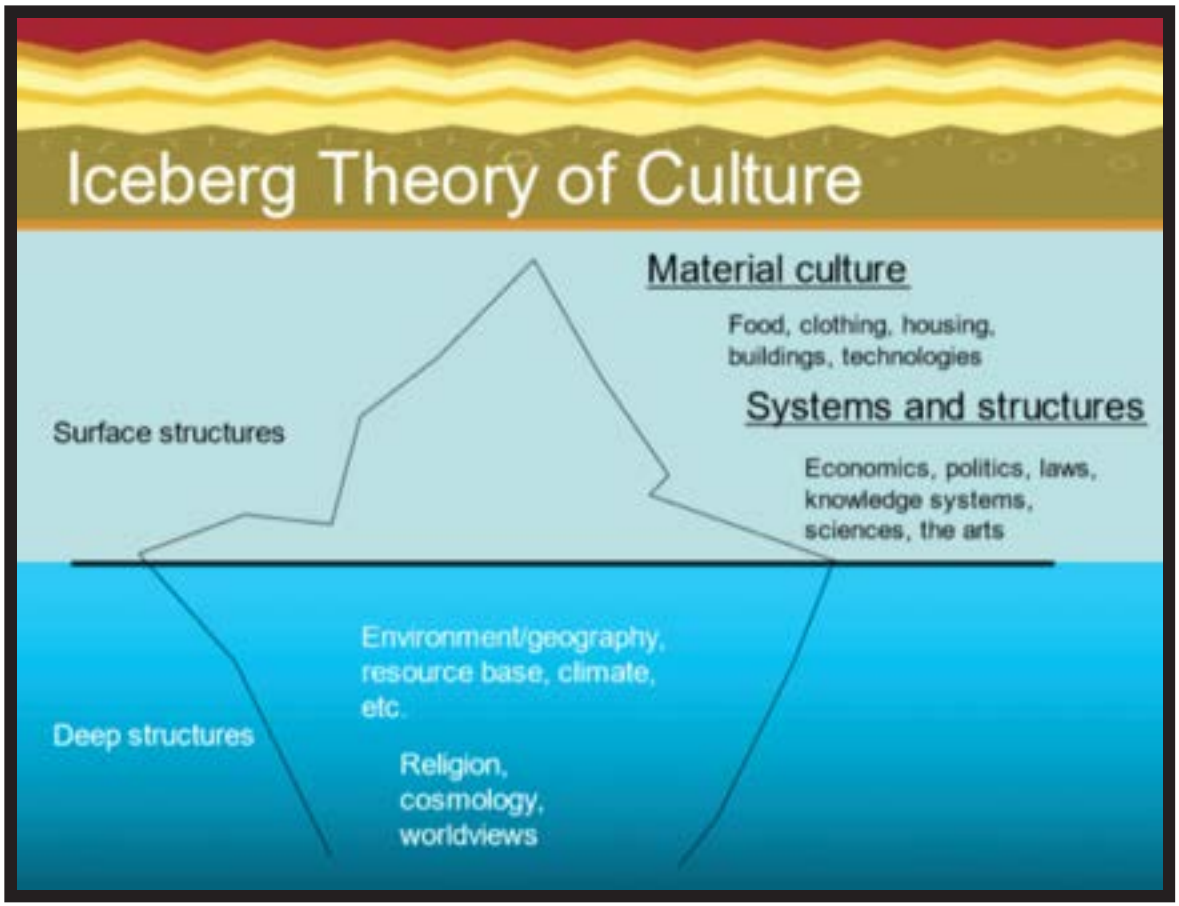
• *Sherry Turkle*

It is true that on the surface, there seems to be some cultural homogenisation going on, especially in the global youth culture, and there is a growing global middle class whose consumption patterns are similar. The evident ubiquity in artifacts is palpable: computers, smart phones, designer clothes, bags, briefcases, mountaineering backpacks or a cup of Starbucks.

But cultures, even when entangled forcibly as in the age of empires, or looped into the orbit of global currents, also choose what they will do with the newfound technologies and tools, appropriating them within their own value system.

They do not function in the same way as in the original source. Cell phones for Filipinos, for instance, do not get used primarily for information but for social connection.

When thinking of “ASEAN identity”, it is important to recognise that identity formation requires changes in the deep structures of a culture, that is, those structures of consciousness that are shaped by the material environment, such as geography, climate, resource base, and the worldviews that emerge from them.



A culture may display changes in the surface structures, that is, the material culture – the way people feed, clothe or shelter themselves, – or in the systems of knowledge built through interacting with the vagaries of their geographies. These days, we see dietary shifts from rice and sushi to bread and pizza; or we borrow modern ideas for transport, innovating from rickshaw and karitela, to tuktuk and jeepney and bullet trains.

But scratch more deeply, and just beneath the surface are souls wedded to familiar spirits, held in thrall by caste, duty to clan and family honour, Feng Shui and other such elaborate codes and rituals for seeking help from nature, protection from evil, and securing the blessings of ancestors for health and happiness.

These are deep structures, and they rarely change through time, if ever; note the persistence of caste and patriarchal and social hierarchies. There is a certain plasticity about human nature as cultural relativists would say, but also a certain permanent integrity about racial genetics and the soil and clime in which our bodies and souls are rooted as essentialists would say.

This is seen in the adaptive power as well as impermeability of Asian cultures.

Failure to engage the deep structures of Asian cultures, for instance, partly accounts for the perceived resistance of our religious traditions to inroads of westernisation. We need to be aware that the conflict between traditional culture and modernity is simply the tip of the iceberg. There is this clash among civilisations that are, at bottom, religiously-rooted, as the missiologist Stephen Neill has sensed early:

"There has never yet been a great religion which did not find its expression in a great culture. There has never yet been a great culture which did not have deep roots in a religion."

• *Stephen Neill*

Samuel Huntington's Clash of Civilisations may have sounded premature, but in a time when we are seeing the resurgence of political religions, we are now more aware of the cultural undercurrents behind fundamentalist Islam, the Religious Right in the US, or the rise of sects.

We live in a continent whose religions rival western Christianity in comprehensiveness and philosophical depth. We need to identify the indigenous as well as borrowed commonalities in our religions and cultures that will make for a peaceable community. These can serve as baseline for constructing an ASEAN identity and social ethic. In addition, we need to identify those differences that need to be negotiated with tolerance and respect.

On “Constructed” and “Inherited” Values

The so-called “ASEAN Way” has been mostly based on our common inherited values. We see this always at play in negotiating country-specific interests. Such values as respect for hierarchy, an emphasis on harmonising differences behind the scenes rather than open conflict, and considerable weight put on unanimity and what is perceived as the collective interest, usually surface when faced with contentious issues.

These values, however, have a shadow side: respect for authority becomes authoritarianism, the preference for backchannel negotiations may lack straightforward transparency, and “constructive engagement” has been without teeth in dealing with human rights abuses and undemocratic regimes.

The founders of ASEAN were right in staying clear of the war of the elephants during the Cold War. From lessons learned from the bloody wars of independence in Europe and our own anti-colonial struggles, we appropriated modern post-Westphalian ideals like the sovereignty of nation-states.

In constructing an “ASEAN identity,” we need to identify which “inherited values” are to be enhanced and brought into the future, and which values emerging from globalising processes need to be adopted and transformed for usability in our own contexts.

The challenge before us is building institutions based on our cultural contexts and not on borrowed ideologies, whether liberal or socialist. There is a need for a consensus on the paradigm shifts that need to happen if we are to grow into what in Europe has been called “a sense of the commons.”

In many countries even beyond this region, dysfunctions in democratic governance arise mainly because of the lack of a civic culture to support it. As the Guatemalan sociologist Bernardo Arevalo puts it, “We have the hardware of democracy, but the software of authoritarianism.”

It is true that democracy as it has developed in the West has been unduly universalised. Pouring billions of dollars in fragile states like Afghanistan for “institution-building” is doomed to fail because there is no “one-size-fits-all” way of doing democracy.

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Our mental models may need to shift, for instance, from seeing individuals as having value only when they are part of the collective self-identity. There is no known philosophical basis, within Asian religious and cultural traditions, for valuing individuals just as persons, apart from the clan to whom they belong or that abstract collectivised entity known as the nation-state. This sort of worldview tends to sacrifice human rights to the altar of "the greater good for the greater number", treating people as mere "collateral damage" on the way to a state's juggernaut vision of "progress" or ethnic purity.

Also, we may need to recover our own ancient practice of the "commons" -- as against post-Westphalian territoriality introduced by colonial powers. Studies tell us that our ancestors have been in constant traffic across seas and porous borders in this region. This enabled trade, people movements and settlements. Migration and cross-cultural exchanges had been happening in this region since 30,000 years ago. The South China Sea, for instance, had been common waters for all the littoral states around it historically.

Also, the world has been continually evolving towards a code of civilisational civility as encrypted in international law. This should be brought to bear in shaping a common culture and identity, one that is based not merely on realpolitik considerations like economic interests or military might. ASEAN must stand against new forms of barbarism that are now emerging, throwing us back to the times when might is right and justice is said to be the interest of the stronger. Forging a distinct regional identity may mean synthesising globally acquired values such as a social ethic that respects a rights-based order, and inherited values that honour the neighbour and make for a genuinely diverse community.

Mapping the Way Forward

Translating ASEAN as an institution into a social identity requires a cultural literacy that fosters a fellow-feeling that bonds people into a community. This is best done not through government edict, but through people-to-people encounters that erase racial preconceptions and stereotypes.

It is not true that proximity necessarily fosters cross-cultural understanding and empathy. Tensions between migrant minorities and their host cultures continually serve as proof of what the social psychologist Daniel Katz has said long ago:

"While the physical barriers to communication are rapidly disappearing, the psychological obstacles remain."

• Daniel Katz

We do not go at constructing a shared identity by papering over differences. It is dangerous to assume similarities that are merely on the surface. There has to be intentionality in the quest for insight on why other people do what they do.

There are also issues of power: migrants and host societies alike should practice adaptive parity, that is, there is equal effort on both sides to mutually understand and adjust to each other's ways of thinking and doing things.

Ultimately, we understand and grow in empathy by engaging each other most personally, with our most authentic selves and beliefs. As the psychologist Henri Nouwen puts it: "What is most personal is also most universal."

The anthropologist Clifford Geertz has put his finger on this mystery by saying that

"… it may be in our oddities, in our particularities and idiosyncrasies as a people, that what is most generically human is revealed."

It is as we encounter the unique peculiarities of our cultures and identities that we discover together the depths of our common humanity as Asian peoples.

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Empowering ASEAN for Future Generations through Culture and Arts Dimensions

Darunee Thamapodol, Nitthaya Sitthichobtham

Throughout the years, I have noticed the ASEAN evolution developing in many aspects, such as four member states joining the Association, the adoption of the ASEAN flag in 1994, the adoption of the ASEAN anthem in 2008, and the establishment of the ASEAN Community in 2015. Despite the fact that communication channels have been broadened by the internet, awareness and understanding of ASEAN is still limited

Most of us may know that the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand, with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration also known as the Bangkok Declaration. The Declaration remains active and is still considered an important milestone by all ASEAN Member States. The Declaration outlines shared goals and objectives centred on cooperation in various economic, social, and cultural areas. It also promotes regional peace and stability through steadfast adherence to the rule of law under the United Nations Charter.

In 1989, 22 years after the ASEAN was established, I began my involvement in ASEAN as a government officer in the cultural sector. At that time, there were only six member states – Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Communication channels were not as prevalent, therefore ASEAN was only well-known among specific groups of people, such as scholars, experts, government officers working in the foreign affairs divisions, and some ASEAN enthusiasts.

Throughout the years, I have noticed the ASEAN evolution developing in many aspects, such as four member states joining the Association, the adoption of the ASEAN flag in 1994, the adoption of the ASEAN anthem in 2008, and the establishment of the ASEAN Community in 2015. Despite the fact that communication channels have been broadened by the internet, awareness and understanding of ASEAN is still limited.

One example is the limited awareness of the ASEAN anthem, which has not been sung by all ASEAN citizens. According to a poll on ASEAN awareness in 2018, it was reported that across the 10 ASEAN Member States, 96% of respondents are aware of ASEAN but fewer than one-third claim to have knowledge of the ASEAN Community and its three pillars — the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC), the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC). The AEC is often mistaken as the ASEAN Community.[i]

Data from “Understanding How Young People See ASEAN Awareness, Values, and Identity” in 2021 stated that 65.7% of respondents are at least somewhat familiar with, and 10.8% are very familiar with ASEAN. Meanwhile, 51.6% of them correctly identified ASEAN’s founding year.[ii]

Apart from ASEAN insiders — academics, related agencies, government organisations, and some citizens — it seems to me that the general public still perceives ASEAN as an institutional identity. There is a lack of encouragement from related agencies and ASEAN governments to emphasise the essence of ASEAN.

Power of Youth: The Power of ASEAN

It is undeniable that the people of my age, Baby Boomers or Gen B, will be retiring soon. The youth is therefore an essential segment of the population — the future workforce and catalyst for economic, social, and cultural development. ASEAN youth ranges from 15 to 35 years old and accounts for 34% of the total population in the region. They need attention and engagement from various stakeholders in the community.

However, because of today’s fast-paced development in the geopolitical, geo-economic, and social spheres, as well as the vulnerability caused by COVID-19, the youth are among the hardest hit by job losses, different learning and training experience, mental related and other challenges. This global phenomenon also increased dependency on technological development and digital tools to improve skills and enhance the learning experience of the youth. However, some of them may encounter constraints in accessing the internet. Digital Literacy in Education Systems Across ASEAN in 2021 specifies that in ASEAN, “rural respondents, ethnic minority respondents and those between 15-24 years old lag behind their urban, non-minority and younger peers in terms of digital literacy.”[iii]

It is undeniable that the people of my age, Baby Boomers or Gen B, will be retiring soon. The youth is therefore an essential segment of the population — the future workforce and catalyst for economic, social, and cultural development

By being equipped with digital skills and growing in a rapidly changing environment, the youth tend to perceive things differently compared to people from previous generations, including their perception of arts and culture. For instance, they might consider visiting museums virtually, appreciating and buying artworks through online platforms, focusing more on inclusive events, disability arts, and environmental friendly activities, etc.

Culture and the Arts: An engine for sustainable development of ASEAN

ASEAN is a region enriched by diversity. Culture and the arts, one of the areas of cooperation in the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, is considered a powerful tool for forging understanding, social cohesion, and regional pride. I strongly believe that culture and the arts can help bridge the gap between ages, genders, races, national boundaries, and other differences within our region.

As ASEAN cultural practitioners in this era, we have to rethink and reinterpret how culture and arts should be promoted and effectively delivered to the target audiences, especially the youth. I would like to provide some recommendations as follows:

Know the Target Audience

When initiating any cultural program, it is very important to know the target audiences by focusing on their overall personas, such as age, educational background, language proficiency, preferences, and pain points. This will help in developing effective events for the right audience group.

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Stay Updated on Global Trends

In the recent years, there are several trends that need to be highlighted and are relevant to the cultural and artistic sector. We may find some of them beneficial to design and enhance cultural projects or outreach programs for youth. Examples include: global warming and environmental issues, cryptocurrencies, NFT platforms, virtual interfaces, and metaverses.

In addition, all cultural personnel need to find ways to reach young people by learning about their media consumption and preferences, synergising ASEAN cultural content across multiple communication platforms (YouTube, TikTok, etc.). However, physical and virtual activities need to go hand in hand for inclusive and sustainable development.

Attract the Youth with the 'Right' Content

Clinging to only traditional media content production with lengthy text or typical photography might not be effective to attract the youth. Savvy cultural practitioners need to create original and interesting, easy-to-digest content relevant to everyday life tied to ASEAN.

Pinpoint the Global Goals and Relevant Strategic Plans for Every Cultural Activity

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and ASEAN Strategic Plan for Culture and Arts 2016-2025 need to be taken into account in all cultural plans and actions.

Promote Multi-collaboration in Both Cross-pillars and Cross-sectors

The need for collaboration is not only for areas of cooperation within the three pillars of ASEAN but also for relevant stakeholders within the community, such as the private sector and civil society organisations. By cooperating with other agencies, it will help boost the program's effectiveness as well as reach wider audiences.

Share Cultural Data and Statistics at the Regional Level

The introduction of data collection, especially Big Data, is prevalent and indispensable these days. It helps keep track of past activities that may be used as a benchmark for enhancing your cultural activities and performances in the future. Establishing a gateway for accessing cultural data and statistics shared by the ASEAN Member States helps all ASEAN practitioners utilise data in developing and implementing innovative, effective policies, as well as identifying new opportunities for collaboration related to arts and cultures. Reliable data security is necessary to create this platform efficiently.

Foster "We-feeling"

Although we come from different nations in Southeast Asia, we are all ASEAN citizens regardless of age, gender, physical or mental capability. Fostering the "we-feeling" in younger generations will support them to promote peace and harmony. I hope that all of us may embrace the we-feeling which paves the way for the ASEAN motto, "One Vision, One Identity, One Community".

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Ipseity and Identity: A Discussion Through the Lens of Cultural Sociology

Mohd Abdoh Damit

... the most prominent hand gesture in Southeast Asia is the clasping of both palms together to greet each other that is considered an act of kindness and respect

The family is often seen as the building block of the society with members having shared values, cultural practices, and emotions. Despite common upbringing, individuals may differ in their biological constitution, ipseity (pre-reflective, tacit level of selfhood), and tastes even though they come from the same parents. This article discusses the importance of cultural practices that shape the individual ipseity and their identity through the lens of cultural sociology. It is the aim of this paper to discuss the linkages between ipseity and identity through an analysis of historical processes that shaped such cultural phenomenon peculiar to the peoples of southeast Asia.

Cultural Sociology

Cultural sociology is the study of the historical processes involved in cultural phenomenon (Merriam-Webster's Dictionary). Historical processes are used to explain the cultural phenomenon in the form of activities or the thought processes involved in crafting culture. For instance, the most prominent hand gesture in Southeast Asia is the clasping of both palms together to greet each other that is considered an act of kindness and respect. Historically with the Indian diaspora extending to Southeast Asia and assimilation of Hindu Buddhist culture, the Anjali hand gesture was a common gesture to pray to a deity. However, processes of enculturation and acculturation of cultures meant that the mudra and its meanings became predominant in southeast Asian culture. The hand-movement created additional inner values for individuals such as empathy, respect, love, and care.

What is ipseity?

Ipseity, as defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, is the pre-reflective, tacit level of selfhood. It is the internal values of an individual shaped by the biological traits inherited genetically as well as traits nurtured by their environment. Ipseity is often defined vaguely as identity, but the difference is clear that identity is always a product of an individual, a collective individual manifestation of thinking, and actions portrayed externally through action, speech, and behaviour.

The level of selfhood in ipseity is an implicit awareness that every experience articulates itself in the first person as "my" experience referred to as the implicit first-person characteristic of consciousness. In other words, all conscious activities have an inherent sense of self-consciousness, which is also known as "self-affection." The base level of selfhood on which all other levels of selfhood are created is the "minimal" or "core" self.

Ipseity looks at the internal qualities of mankind

Ipseity looks at the internal qualities of mankind. Such examples will be the sense of belief, empathy, feelings, purity, and other internal attributes felt by the individual. Such sense of right and wrong are based on one's sense of belief.

Historical Events that Shaped Ipsiety of the Peoples of Southeast Asia

The history of Southeast Asia spans two separate subregions: Mainland Southeast Asia (also known as Indochina) and Maritime Southeast Asia (also known as Insular Southeast Asia), which together make up the people of Southeast Asia from prehistory to the present. Mainland Southeast Asia includes Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar (or Burma), Peninsular Malaysia, Thailand, and Viet Nam. Maritime Southeast Asia includes Brunei Darussalam, the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Christmas Island, East Malaysia, East Timor, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Singapore.

Southeast Asians, according to some experts, are the direct descendants of Homo erectus, who travelled from Africa to Asia some 1.8 million years ago. Thus, Homo erectus fossils like Dali and Peking Man can be used to reconstruct the morphological traits that distinguish modern Asians from human beings in other regions. The Multiregional concept of human origins, and consequently of Southeast Asians, heavily relies on the Dali skull.

A regional or limited evolution was formerly said to be supported by the fossil record from Indonesia. There has been evidence to support the theory that modern Indonesians and Indigenous Australians are directly descended from Homo erectus individuals like the Java Man. It is likely that a more recent migration of Homo sapiens through the Indonesian archipelago led to the first people to colonise Indonesia and Australia.

The earliest evidence of Homo sapiens in maritime Southeast Asia dates back at least 50,000 years and 70,000 years in mainland Southeast Asia. East Asian-related (Basal East Asian) groups moved south from Mainland Southeast Asia into Maritime Southeast Asia starting 25,000 years ago. Hoabinhian inhabitants from mainland Southeast Asia have established a tradition and culture of distinctive artefact and tool making as early as 10,000 years ago. Neolithic Austroasiatic peoples settled in Indochina via land routes, whereas seaborne Austronesian immigrants favoured Maritime Southeast Asia as their new home. In the lowlands and river floodplains of Indochina, the earliest agricultural cultures that farmed millet and wet-rice first appeared approximately 1700 BCE.

From 290 BCE through the 15th century CE, either through Indianisation or Chinese maritime trade, when Hindu-Buddhist influences were absorbed into regional governmental structures, Southeast Asia was under the cultural influence of India. Trade, cultural, and political ties were developed with Southeast Asian kingdoms in Burma, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Poli, Indonesia, the Malay Peninsula, the Philippines, Cambodia, and Champa by Indian Subcontinent kingdoms along the southeast coast. Southeast Asian polities were Indianised. Likewise, Hindu-Buddhist Mandala (polities, city states, and confederacies) caused Southeast Asia to become Indianised and Sanskritised inside the Indosphere.

Systems of beliefs brought by the sense of divine was transferred down from generation to generation. The notion of “devaraja” or the god-king defined the political culture. Depending on the region, the devaraja order developed from both Hinduism and various local customs. The king was taught to be a manifestation of Bhagawan, who is frequently identified with Shiva or Vishnu. The idea held that the king was the earth's living god and had transcending qualities. The Bharati notion of Chakravartin (universal king) is closely related to this idea. It is regarded in politics as the justification provided by God for a king's reign. The idea was institutionalised and given its elaborate manifestations in prehistoric Java and Cambodia, where the king's divine reign was celebrated with the construction of structures like Prambanan and Angkor Wat.

With the coming of Islam and Christianity, the rules of law changed as dictated by the religions, however, the ipseity of submission to the king (or chieftains, imams, or priests) became abundant. Their roles in the acculturation of the traditional values including the respect for elders, selflessness, and fear of making mistakes (sopan in malay) still prevail. The community saw the establishment and concretisation of the social culture based on social settings of different communities.

With colonisation, the political-culture and social-culture of Southeast Asia changed according to the severity of the colonisation and the cultural influence brought by colonisation. Such changes include cultural practices such as language, performing arts (including the assimilation of musical instruments), food (such as the introduction of milk and cheese), as well as the attires (using coloured textiles became more abundant). Cultural values in society were impacted given more abundant materials and jobs created, migration to cities, and the rise of the working class. Historical events shaped the political and social culture of the peoples of Southeast Asia.

The Values that Shaped the Ipsiety of the Peoples of South-east Asia

Different historical events shaped the values of the peoples of Southeast Asia. From pre-historic to colonialism to post World War II, these values evolved to create the ipseity of the peoples. I postulate few values described below that may have shaped ipseity that persists within the region.

Different historical events shaped the values of the peoples of Southeast Asia. From pre-historic to colonialism to post World War II, these values evolved to create the ipseity of the peoples

The Belief in the Divine

There are many purposes for religion in society. These include providing life meaning and purpose, preserving social cohesion and stability, acting as a tool for social behaviour management, fostering physical and mental well-being, and inspiring people to work for social change. Human being values religion because it can help them become moral beings. Religion teaches people about moral principles since human thought may be both good and terrible.

Every person must ideally strive for justice, peace, and prosperity to spare society from turmoil, division, social problems, and other issues. A person must possess a faultless mentality, to be obedient in following instructions, to have knowledge, and to be thankful to god in order to have a noble character. The battle against lust and spiritual practices are two strategies to develop and cultivate decent morality.

Considering that the peoples of Southeast Asia have historically experienced waves of incoming different religions, the notions of the belief in god, the mystical world, and the good versus the evil have been part and parcel of the society.

Love and Respect for the Elderly

Through time and tide, the values of love and respect for the elderly is a value that spans across all societies in Southeast Asia. Filial piety and the concept of the extended family can still be seen across Southeast Asia. There are many reasons why love and respect for the elderly plays an important role. Elders are respected for their experiences and knowledge, their wisdom, and their contributions in society. Respect as a fundamental human quality, is the acceptance of the elderly for who they are and in turn, builds feelings of trust, safety, and well-being.

Through time and tide, the values of love and respect for the elderly is a value that spans across all societies in Southeast Asia. Filial piety and the concept of the extended family can still be seen across Southeast Asia

The elderly in Southeast Asian society is still the custodian of culture and traditional legal systems. Customary laws *(or adat)* are being governed by the elderly through a system of unwritten legislation, folkways, mores and taboos.

Selflessness

True selflessness is the pure action without the notion of profit, what's for oneself and in the true reason of the action. Being selfless makes it easier to identify with and relate to others. One will not act with arrogance or a need to be seen. By acting from the heart and soul rather than the ego, selflessness enables to access true, desired emotions. It helps to have better relationships because the perspective of being in a relationship for the other person changed to expecting the significant others and make one feel a specific way.

Caution and Discretion about Making Mistakes

One common value in Southeast Asian society is the feeling of shame when making mistakes. As much as possible, a member of the society refrains from breaching the customary laws or breaking the norms of the society. This can be seen through the traditional practices of paying fine using traditional cultural materials such as the gongs when one makes mistakes.

Only few elderlies are present in traditional courts and establish a closed kinship in decision making. The purpose of such small congregation is to discuss wrong doings, consequences and the fine associated with the actions. The small number of people in the traditional courts ensure that the discussion will only stay within them to cover the mistakes and wrong doings from being exposed to the wider society. Thus, harmony and cohesiveness is maintained in the society.

Communal Social Practices

It is a common practice to do everything together in the Southeast Asian society. The traditional family often includes the extended kin. This can be shown by the traditional houses where communal places are part of the architectural designs. The long houses, for example, have shared common spaces and amenities that allow social interaction such as a shared veranda, shared kitchen and dining, and shared toilets. Communities work on shared farms and marketplaces. Farming and fishing activities are done together as well as sharing and marketing of produce as part of the daily activities done communally.

It is a common practice to do everything together in the Southeast Asian society

Having combined settings, one could not escape being together in creating a strong community that enhances the expression of social practices, norms and cultural traditions. We find cultural dissemination through acculturation, enculturation, shared norms and practices as common modus operandi in strengthening the ipseity and the identity of the community.

From the ipseity to the Identity: Gemeinschaft vs Gesellschaft

The five values I postulated as being part of the internal processes that shape the individual is common among the peoples of Southeast Asia. Gemeinschaft, which is sometimes translated as "community," is a concept that refers to people who are connected by shared norms, frequently because they occupy the same location and hold similar values. Gesellschaft, which is frequently translated as "society," describes organisations where membership is primarily motivated by self-interest.

While Gesellschaft maintains its balance through police, laws, tribunals, and prisons, Gemeinschaft achieves equilibrium through morals, conformism, and exclusion (social control). While written laws exist in Gesellschaft, regulations in Gemeinschaft are implicit (sometimes as uncodified laws). According to Eric Hobsbawm, the ambivalent envy felt by those built by Gesellschaft for residual pockets of Gemeinschaft, even as they ultimately erode their existence, is highlighted by Fredric Jameson as globalisation transforms the entire planet into an increasingly remote version of Gesellschaft.

As I highlighted in the introduction, the individual makes up the family which in aggregate makes up the society. Hence, the relationship between the individual, the family, and the society is a strong one. The shaping of the identity of the community is through the interactions of different individuals with common and strong ipseity, enhanced through communal social practice and shared feelings in a group with a common sense of belief.

With the evolution and need for grouping societies and communities together in a system of governance or the state, the concept of nationhood or the state emerged. In a statehood system, the system of governance can be summarised in the following table:

	Sense of Belief	**Juristic Approach**	**Values**	**Culture**
Individual	Individual Manifestation	Sense of right and wrong	Ipseity	Trend of Follower
Society	Aggregate Manifestation	Traditional / Religious Courts	Ascribed Identity	Social Culture
Statehood	National Religion	National Legislation	Aspired Identity	Political Culture
Regional**	Understanding and respect of each other's religion	Treaties, laws, declaration, international agreements	Aspired identity (with empathy of one's ascribed identity)	Celebrating Commonalities, Respecting Differences

**from Amin Abdul Aziz (IG Matrix)*
***a suggestion*

...it is vital for the people to safeguard, protect, and promote cultural heritage to ensure sustainability and maintenance of the Southeast Asian identity

Ipseity is owned by each individual, shaped by nature or nurtured, and determined by the values ascribed or aspired by them. Identity however is a product of the expression of the ipseity, shared between the community or society but conformed to the norms and social practice of the community or society. The peoples of Southeast Asia are known to be the people with respected culture, safeguarded heritage, and rich history. Through the lens of cultural sociology, it is proven that the identity of the peoples of Southeast Asia has been shaped for thousands of years. Thus, it is vital for the people to safeguard, protect, and promote cultural heritage to ensure sustainability and maintenance of the Southeast Asian identity.

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Three Proposals to Foster ASEAN Identity

Suh Jeong-in

Fostering “ASEAN Identity" is the vision and dream of ASEAN founding leaders half a century ago.

Non-ASEAN Member States have been paying attention to the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) as the most important and visible one of the three ASEAN Communities, and ASEAN also sees it as a catalyst for realising the ASEAN Community. However, I have a different perspective.

The agenda and the ultimate objective of the ASEAN founding fathers was to achieve the well-being of their people through realising peace and stability without wars, under a concept of a “One Southeast Asia / Southeast Asia as a whole.” In this process, the vision adopted "no one left behind ASEAN," where no country or people from the region would be excluded.

In line with this vision of the Founding Fathers, ASEAN leaders have been striving for "One Vision, One Identity, One Community" over the past 50 years, documented in the ASEAN Vision. As a result, ASEAN citizens value ASEAN identity, We-feeling, and ASEAN-ness. However, what is ASEAN identity? The importance of ASEAN identity was stipulated in the ASEAN Bali Concord II in 2003, the ASEAN Charter in 2008, and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint in 2009, which also includes an action plan for enhancing ASEAN identity. The "Narrative of ASEAN Identity" in 2020 defined ASEAN identity as follows:

"The ASEAN Identity is a process of social construct defined by balanced combination of ‘Constructed Values’ and ‘Inherited Values’ that will strengthen the ASEAN Community."

The “Narrative of ASEAN Identity” refers to the Constructed Values, consciously cultivated in the post-colonial era through a leader-centred, top-down approach, while the Inherited Values are shaped and influenced by the underlying primordial Southeast Asia and foreign elements from Indian, Chinese, Islamic, and Western cultures and nurtured through a bottom-up approach. I think that this is an appropriate definition.

To what extent has this ASEAN identity been achieved? From the perspective of the author who has focused more than 20 years in ASEAN of a 35-year diplomatic career, the Constructed Values (non-interference in internal affairs, non-use of force, respect for sovereignty, ASEAN way, etc.) have become embodied among ASEAN leaders. However, the Inherited Values among the general ASEAN population have yet to catch up.

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To truly realise the ASEAN Community, it is necessary to further foster a sense of identity among the ASEAN people. In this regard, I propose three concrete proposals.

First, the publication of a joint Southeast Asian/ASEAN textbook.

Former Thai Foreign Minister, Kasit Piromya made such a proposal. Looking ahead for the next 50 years, it is necessary to publish a joint ASEAN textbook for the future ASEAN leaders. By studying this textbook, ASEAN identity will naturally be fostered. In this textbook, instead of introducing past war heroes of each Member State, it would be good to introduce representative figures from each country who have positively influenced the common development and values of ASEAN, and convey to future generations the visions for ASEAN they dreamed of, and the policy implications to achieve them.

Looking ahead for the next 50 years, it is necessary to publish a joint ASEAN textbook for the future ASEAN leaders

Second, the launch of a ASEAN Youth Volunteer Corps.

When the ASEAN Volunteer Corps engages in volunteer activities within other ASEAN Member States through collective action, a “We-consciousness” could be nurtured. In 2016, the European Union (EU) launched the "European Solidarity Corps," a European version of the Peace Corps, as one of the ways to enhance solidarity among EU member states, supporting for up to one year activities in education, health, social integration, food provision, shelter construction, settlement support for immigrants or refugees, environmental protection, and natural disaster prevention of youth from the age of 18 to 30. This can be understood as part of the efforts to bind Europe together through values, and not through treaties or economic interests. ASEAN can learn from the EU in this regard.

When the ASEAN Volunteer Corps engages in volunteer activities within other ASEAN Member States through collective action, a “We-consciousness” could be nurtured

Third, the establishment of the ASEAN Institute for Social and Cultural Studies.

In order to strengthen ASEAN identity, a dedicated organisation for social and cultural research is needed

In order to strengthen ASEAN identity, a dedicated organisation for social and cultural research is needed. In the socio-cultural sector, no such institute exists, compared to the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) in the economic sector. Now is the time to start the endeavour in establishing the ASEAN Institute for Social and Cultural Studies. The function of this institute should be conducting joint research, developing and distributing materials on the common culture and values of ASEAN, and contributing to the advancement of ASEAN identity in the long term. If ASEAN suffers a fatigue of establishing new entities, ASEAN may wish to explore ways to strengthen the existing organisations including ASEAN Foundation to take on such research mandates.

The Republic of Korea, as a Dialogue Partner of ASEAN for over 34 years, has emphasised cooperation in the socio-cultural sector in order to enhance ASEAN identity

The Republic of Korea, as a Dialogue Partner of ASEAN for over 34 years, has emphasised cooperation in the socio-cultural sector in order to enhance ASEAN identity. To this end, Korea has established the ASEAN Culture House in Busan in 2017 and supported restoration of ASEAN cultural heritage, among other socio-cultural projects. I am confident that the Korean government will continue and promote such endeavours in the future. ASEAN identity could be further mainstreamed in cooperation with not only Korea but also with other dialogue partners.

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Prospects for Co-Prosperity and Collaboration among ASEAN-ROK Films[i]

Oh Seok Guen

The concept of "co-prosperity for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations – Republic of Korea (ASEAN-ROK) films" remains vague, because each nation has a different history of film culture, different levels of appreciation for and awareness of other cultures. Market strategies and regulatory systems also vary between companies. There are those with a generally negative view of collaboration. Nevertheless, the perception that we each urgently need to find a new vision for the development of our own country's film industry, in line with changes in the media environment, seems to be shared at the national level.

This article begins with the hopeful premise that a modest, provincial city can become a creative film hub, connecting with other similar cities, generating self-sustaining trade, networking, and exchange platforms together. To put such a concept into practice will require overcoming many hurdles. Here, we will first review the necessary prerequisites for co-prosperity and the ethics of collaboration that must be agreed upon before film producers can successfully work together, followed by some suggestions on how this vision of co-prosperity might be achieved.

Prerequisites for Co-Prosperity and the Ethics of Collaboration

First, local community achievements and activities should be prioritised.

It can be argued that glorecalisation (global + regional + local) is the way forward in the context of viewing large regions such as ASEAN as new markets. A provincial area, as a standard unit of life by any criterion, is a physical place where people live, and a place of solidarity and potential for development. Individual regions must communicate horizontally with neighbouring areas. From the perspective of film production, above all, regions should form local film hubs to create an environment in which films and the wider economy can thrive.

It can be argued that glorecalisation (global + regional + local) is the way forward in the context of viewing large regions such as ASEAN as new markets

Like Davao City in the Philippines, areas can be reborn as regional film hubs when communities develop local networks. In the Philippines, thanks to digital technology, people living in different regions can interact with local film producers independently, without the involvement of producers in Manila. Davao, the commercial and cultural hub of Mindanao, a huge island in the southern Philippines, has recently emerged as a hub for film production; the biggest advantage of the locale being its proximity to Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore.

The achievements of Isan, a northeastern region of Thailand, are another example of local potential. Isan is the fastest growing regional film market in Thailand, with new opportunities offered by its large population and mostly low-skilled workforce. Its potential as a market was demonstrated by the massive success of PBTB E-san Indy (2014) produced by independent film group, E-san Indy Film Studio Co., Ltd. The film served as the turning point for the region becoming a local film market; made by film directors from Isan, filmed in Isan, and aimed at audiences in Isan rather than Bangkok.

Busan in Korea is also growing into an innovative film hub. The launch of Busan International Film Festival in 1996 was significant beyond simply being a successful, large-scale event. The Busan Film Commission was organised, and various systems and funds were created to encourage local film businesses. The Busan Film Commission has been planning and implementing new projects in connection with film commissions not only in Korea but also around the world. The Busan Metropolitan Government has finally established Busan Asian Film School (AFiS), an educational institute for producers. Every year the most promising young filmmakers in Asia will come to reside and study in Busan.

Second, increase mobility.

Local to local movement means the movement of people and experiences. To network a market and transform it into a flow of exchange rather than merely a transaction, people must first be able to move.

In terms of this mobility, the role of the film festival cannot be overstated. Studies have been conducted on the artistic, financial, and geopolitical role of film festivals. In Asia, film festivals have also been linked to the cultural economy, triggering rich dialogue within the creative industries. Markets, a side event at festivals, have also drawn attention to the production and distribution of independent and arthouse films and boosted the health of the independent film ecosystem. Just as the Marché du Film at Cannes Film Festival and the European Film Market at Berlin International Film Festival attract huge audiences, bringing art and commerce together, Asian transnational film festivals have likewise attracted businesses to their markets. This is especially true for Busan International Film Festival (BIFF). For the purpose of introducing Asian films to Asian audiences, BIFF continues to support independent Asian films, which would otherwise have few opportunities to travel abroad. This allows filmmakers to gather in one place, to interact and find business partners, and to take advantage of opportunities they could not access domestically.

Thanks to many Asian film festivals, including ASEAN, Asian filmmakers were able to travel, garnering praise worldwide, and transforming their own national film cultures

Thanks to many Asian film festivals, including ASEAN, Asian filmmakers were able to travel, garnering praise worldwide, and transforming their own national film cultures. Now, as festivals have so far succeeded in doing, we need to develop additional programs for encouraging and promoting the mobility of up-and-coming filmmakers.

The ethics of collaboration must also be considered; diversity and inclusive development being the most important principles. If nations which differ in the size of their film markets are to collaborate successfully, a common set of ethics will be needed.

David Throsby argued in “Economics and Culture” that cultural diversity is more complex than natural diversity.[ii] However, many are concerned about the colonialisation of film culture. In order to cooperate within ASEAN, it is argued that the gaps caused by differences in economic power between countries and the processes of building film culture must be acknowledged. The priority should be to create a foundation for coexistence while working towards eventually bridging these gaps.

The ethics of collaboration must also be considered; diversity and inclusive development being the most important principles

The possibilities for collaboration between Korea and ASEAN can largely be divided into five categories: mutual learning and education programs; planning and development labs; project markets and investor matching programs; co-production; and distribution support and audience development. Public funding will be required, but the scope of collaboration can be expanded in the meantime through baby steps. It is very difficult for local film producers in countries where the film market is underdeveloped to stand on their own feet. The situation for independent films is more difficult. The same is true in Korea.

In general, Asian independent and arthouse films are not in the situation to be able to compete on an equal footing with mainstream films. In addition, they do not have independent and stable niche markets, and have not been prioritised in terms of governmental film policy. This situation further highlights the need for collaboration between independent film producers in Asia.

Tour Workshops and Training of Local Filmmakers

Independent film producers have less understanding of the film market than mainstream commercial filmmakers. They have little experience in the domestic market and are unfamiliar with overseas markets. Before fostering collaboration, multidimensional education allowing understanding of one another's film cultures and histories will be needed.

Knowledge-sharing is essential to promote networking. There are three main methods by which to promote this principle.

First, visit the workshops of established educational programs.

Participate in a prestigious workshop program like the AFA (Asian Film Academy) run by Busan International Film Festival, or tour educational programs linked to local universities such as those of Singapore International Film Festival.

Second, create a blueprint for collaboration and overseas business which can be shared in order to find willing producers.

The sluggishness of Korean independent film is a problem caused by a lack of creative producers. The situation in the Philippines is similar. However, the Philippine approach has been somewhat different. Recognising the lack of local producers, every year the Film Development Council of the Philippines (FDCP) calls the organisers of film festivals in 17 different regions to Manila to hold a roundtable. Film directors in need of producers are given the opportunity to interact with producers in Manila.

Third, the greatest necessity for mutual learning is to break through the language barrier.

If we can learn and communicate in our own languages, many obstacles disappear. However, not all regional filmmakers are familiar with English, and English-dependent communication has obvious limitations. Therefore, as we envision practical and equal collaboration, we need to find a way for Asian filmmakers to understand and communicate business-related ideas in their own languages.

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Maintain Planning and Development Labs and Streamline IP Management

Every society tells its own story. The stories are as diverse as their histories are different. If even a minor story becomes content, it is an asset worth protecting. Hollywood has become the centre of the movie industry because of its excellent strategies and technologies for turning its own story content into assets. The first process of developing such a story is through the efforts of scriptwriters, directors, and producers. The script, or sometimes simply the idea for a story, developed through these efforts, enters the production stages only when investors have agreed. This is why discussion and mentoring from experts are necessary in the planning and development process. The common goal of all labs is to find “great stories”.

A screenplay completed through a planning and development lab will become someone's intellectual property (IP) in the future. Public planning and development are essential for independent films that are struggling financially. The problem is that existing planning and development labs are currently experiencing financial difficulties themselves. Therefore, as planning and development labs work in collaboration with one another, their utility will only be justified if they expand their scope to include IP business.

Improve Investment Performance at Project Markets and Revitalise Financing Forums

While a film festival is a venue that welcomes producers/filmmakers who have completed their films, after a hard journey, the project market is a presales and co-production market that embraces the desperation and future dreams of those who have yet to complete their films.

A project market is, itself, a base for cross-border collaboration. At a project market, stories which have "traveled" from different regions gather. Each story evolves anew as it travels. As soon as a project is selected for a project market, the prospects of its completion double. In Asia, robust project markets have created healthy competition. They include the Asian Project Market (APM) at Busan International Film Festival, the Hong Kong-Asia Film Financing Forum (HAF) at Hong Kong International Film Festival, the Film Project Promotion (FPP) at Taipei Golden Horse Film Festival, and the Network of Asian Fantastic Films (NAFF) at Bucheon International Fantastic Film Festival.

While a film festival is a venue that welcomes producers/filmmakers who have completed their films, after a hard journey, the project market is a presales and co-production market that embraces the desperation and future dreams of those who have yet to complete their films

Develop Open Exchange Project Series and Expand Flexible Co-productions

The production quality and technical proficiency of Asian films has improved dramatically over the past decade, thanks largely to advances in digital technology. The cinematic flare of arthouse films has likewise increased. In particular, the achievements of independent films in Southeast Asia are noteworthy. However, production costs vary by nation, and even low production costs do not necessarily make it easier to secure a budget. For this reason, film producers in Southeast Asia look to international co-production as an alternative. In the case of independent and arthouse films, international co-production is the only viable option.

Singapore, which has investment capacity but a small domestic market, wants to make good use of this environment. Singapore is strategically supporting international co-productions to become a regional film hub encompassing neighboring regions.

Promote Crowd-based Online and Offline Community Screenings and Audience Development

It is not easy to align Southeast and Northeast Asia as regions on the same continent. This is because film culture and range of cultural resources vary depending on country and region, and it is unclear how each of these resources can interact in mutually beneficial ways, either inside or outside of Asia. Therefore, all nations must understand these challenges as they strive to ascertain one another's cultural resources. For marketing, distribution, and audience development, tasks which can be approached collaboratively without the oppressive direct distribution lines or unilateral market dominance of more powerful film industries are as follows:

First, on-demand, crowd-sourced cinema platforms can be created to establish a system in which audiences can watch the films they want at local cinemas. Distributors of independent art films in ASEAN-ROK should strengthen their screening networks, along with cinematheques, microcinemas, and independent film theaters.

Second, build pan-Asian online platforms for digital releases. Online platforms have become as important an alternative as relationships with microcinemas. In order to upload large numbers of independent art films from ASEAN-ROK, it is worth considering partnerships with well-known platforms.

Third, film screening should be further expanded by utilising film festivals and film archives, and audiences should be developed by discovering and supporting local social media marketers. Since a festival is itself a large-scale marketing venue and an important showcase, Asian film festivals should seek ways to market films from one another's countries jointly.

The recent size and strength of the market for ASEAN films has provided Asian filmmakers with the opportunity to collaborate and communicate, and highlighted the need to find and develop win-win models for the benefit of all involved

Asian films, including ASEAN, have lost ground in their own nations thanks to the powerful and calculated marketing strategies of Hollywood and the large media companies, with some having witnessed the complete collapse of their domestic film market. However, the entire world is now turning to Asian film markets. Asia is no longer victim to the might of the Hollywood box office. The recent size and strength of the market for ASEAN films has provided Asian filmmakers with the opportunity to collaborate and communicate, and highlighted the need to find and develop win-win models for the benefit of all involved. Korea will struggle if we plan and produce only with a view to the domestic market, just as Hong Kong films have somehow disappeared. Hopefully, ASEAN and Korea will be proactive in advancing exchange and collaboration, aiming for the collective development of the entire Asian film industry.

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[i] This think piece cites passages from a research paper, titled Visions of Competence and Co-prosperity in Asian Films, written and researched under the leadership of Oh Seok-geun and his team in support of enhancing cooperation in film development and organisations between ROK and ASEAN during his tenure as Chairman of the Korean Film Council.

[ii] Throsby, David. “Economics and Culture”. Cambridge University Press.

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Recalibrating the Identity Question for the New ASEAN

Vongthep Arthakaivalvatee

ASEAN prides itself on the motto, *"One Vision, One Identity, One Community"*. This is the right path for the 10 Southeast Asian countries in moving towards regional integration. Since its founding in 1967, ASEAN has played an important role in maintaining regional peace and stability, with its convening power able to bring together major powers, even those involved in strategic competition. ASEAN has also emerged as a global economic force. The human face of ASEAN, however, is still to figure as prominently, which brings into question the actualisation of this motto.

When it comes to ASEAN awareness, the generalised perception is that people tend to identify ASEAN within the context of its economic community – referring to ASEAN and AEC (ASEAN Economic Community) interchangeably. There, the myth lies in the very institutional identity itself. It is high time that we recalibrate our new thinking on the identity issue seriously.

When it comes to ASEAN awareness, the generalised perception is that people tend to identify ASEAN within the context of its economic community – referring to ASEAN and AEC (ASEAN Economic Community) interchangeably

It is true that the level of ASEAN integration is not one of the type of a supranational organisation. With its geographically and culturally diverse context, ASEAN cannot be fully integrated if its reason for existence is premised only on the economic side of things. We must bring all the people of ASEAN on board for the Community-building journey.

People are the ones who drive a thriving economy. Their welfare and protection, education, skill development, mobility and sense of belonging are crucial. With 60% of the 620 million population of ASEAN being the youth, how the future generations identify themselves as ASEAN citizens will have a bearing on the new trajectory. Undoubtedly, intergenerational dialogue will continue to be high on the agenda. The question is: "How can we instill the we-feeling in all aspects of ASEAN discourse?"

While we treasure our respective national identity, it is equally important to foster a common ASEAN identity. As the ASEAN vision beyond 2025 is currently being formulated, we need to advocate for new paradigm shifts in understanding ASEAN in various human contexts.

While we treasure our respective national identity, it is equally important to foster a common ASEAN identity

Let us take a look at the basics. ASEAN started off as — and still is — an intergovernmental organisation. It has a distinctive work culture, embracing the norm of non-interference in domestic affairs of other countries. This allows ASEAN to build consensus on issues of mutual cooperation without confrontation. This so-called "ASEAN Way" is mainly depicted through photos of senior officials posing with their cross handshakes. Even the ASEAN Anthem is only played when there is a relevant official event, and not widely heard on TV or radio stations in ASEAN countries.

... ASEAN is no longer just an intergovernmental organisation; it is a Community with the ASEAN peoples at the heart of it

Thus, it should not come as a surprise that the public tends to associate ASEAN with the image of an elite and exclusive diplomats' club without much space for public participation. To forge a common identity, basic ASEAN values must be mainstreamed in all facets of society. From having the ASEAN Anthem taught and sung by our school children, to engendering more open dialogue between civil society and policymakers, these should give enough direction for the human face of the new ASEAN.

The new narrative should highlight ASEAN as a new way of life. Since the launch of the ASEAN Community, ASEAN is no longer just an intergovernmental organisation; it is a Community with the ASEAN peoples at the heart of it. This would make the idea and ideals of ASEAN more accessible to women and men on the street. Equally important is the promotion of people's inclusivity and their sense of belonging. For example, when a natural disaster strikes in any member country, ASEAN responds as one by providing prompt humanitarian assistance. The affected people find solace in seeing the ASEAN flag being flown in distressed areas. They can identify with the we-feeling that ASEAN is there for them when needed the most.

The question of ASEAN identity is intertwined with the long-standing norm of non-interference. If we are searching for a new paradigm for the ASEAN vision beyond 2025, we need to muster the courage to rethink such norm with a view of promoting and protecting human rights. ASEAN needs to move with time.

In this predicament, it may be asked, how can *One Identity* be realised when the disenfranchisement of our people is still in place?

Perhaps the nexus between conflict and identity can be examined through the lens of the ASEAN Culture of Prevention.[i] For starters, we need to ensure that marginalisation and victimisation is not a pathway to radicalisation. A culture of peace and values of moderation are crucial to dialogue facilitation. As such, various sectors of ASEAN — be they education, youth, social welfare, sports, culture and information — have an important role to play.

ASEAN needs to take urgent steps in promoting upstream, preventive, and confidence-building measures that address the inclusivity of all people. This should complement the work of the powers that be in securing a political breakthrough. Every day that goes by when ASEAN is not able to engage all stakeholders, the burden of proof in our collective resolve shifts.

With expressed concern over the erosion of the ASEAN identity, let us also look at causes for optimism where we can transform things for the better in our vision beyond 2025.

...identity must be built on a common sense of pride. ...Mainstreaming ASEAN's shared history in the national education curriculum can also enhance knowledge of regionalism

First, ASEAN connectivity that emphasises people's mobility holds the key to a socially cohesive integration. ASEAN scholarship and youth exchange programmes not only bring our young people together, they also offer a chance for them to understand one another's culture. The same can be said about the movement of people, professionals, and labour across borders. Thus, ASEAN should facilitate a conducive environment that promotes greater interaction among its citizens.

Second, identity must be built on a common sense of pride. Through formal education, ASEAN Member States employ the teaching of history as one of the means to inculcate nationalism. Mainstreaming ASEAN's shared history in the national education curriculum can also enhance knowledge of regionalism. Being exposed to Southeast Asia's diplomatic history, decolonisation and nation-building early on, young ASEAN generations can become more historically conscious about ASEAN's place in the world.

... film is arguably the best way to show an international audience a glimpse of the cultural life of another country. Therefore, ASEAN should redouble its efforts to promote the ASEAN film industry and its ecosystems, especially through international co-production

Third, the pride of ASEAN achievements on the global stage often reverberates back home. In sports, for example, ASEAN spectators should be proud of athletes from other member states who win medals from the Olympics or other sports competitions. Similarly, a joint ASEAN bid for the 2034 World Cup should be welcomed as a rallying point for ASEAN enthusiasm.

Also, film is arguably the best way to show an international audience a glimpse of the cultural life of another country. Therefore, ASEAN should redouble its efforts to promote the ASEAN film industry and its ecosystems, especially through international co-production. If renowned filmmakers like Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Brillante Mendoza and Rithy Panh, to name a few, have graced the stages of Cannes and the Oscars, our pride in their work should be felt across the region. They should be considered ASEAN heroes who inspire the up-and-coming generations.

With the Republic of Korea articulating a strong policy to cooperate with ASEAN in socio-cultural fields, ASEAN should leverage the Korean Wave to adapt to its own identity learning curve. The ASEAN-ROK Film Leaders Incubator (FLY) short filmmaking workshop is one example of this, but more should be done.

In music, we learned that the personal journey of one aspiring young artist from Thailand led to the making of an international superstar — Lisa from the K-Pop girl group Blackpink. With 95 million Instagram followers, Lisa is the true definition of soft power. Promoting identity is a brand-building exercise. If we want to see the likes of Lisa and similar stories coming from ASEAN countries, we need to invest more in nurturing our talents in the arts and culture. Only by doing so will ASEAN see the transformation of its robust creative economy in the years to come.

There is a glimmer of hope in recalibrating the narrative of the new ASEAN identity with a human face. Interestingly, the clue is already in the lyrics of the ASEAN anthem: *"We dare to dream, we care to share, together for ASEAN"*. But the key is in ASEAN's ability to cross the Rubicon and turn things around.

When we feel this sense of togetherness with the heritage we treasure, the air we breathe and all the beaches we love, it is a good sign that ASEAN identity has seen the dawn of a new day

Going forward, democratisation and respect for human rights and freedom of expression will be key factors that can usher ASEAN into the new era of shared identity. It is the era where people are actively conscious about their rights and creativity without fear of censorship — where the young and the marginalised are empowered to amplify their voices. When we feel this sense of togetherness with the heritage we treasure, the air we breathe and all the beaches we love, it is a good sign that ASEAN identity has seen the dawn of a new day.

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[i] ASEAN Leaders adopted the ASEAN Declaration on Culture of Prevention or a Peaceful, Inclusive, Resilient, Healthy and Harmonious Society at the 33rd ASEAN Summit held in Manila, Philippines in 2017.

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What are ASEAN Values? An Agenda for Knowledge Building

Dr Eric C. Thompson

In November 2020, officials at the 37th ASEAN Summit adopted "The Narrative of ASEAN Identity". The purpose of this document is to serve as a basis for a shared ASEAN Identity and "remind ASEAN Member States of who we are, where we came from, and where we are heading, both as an organisation as well as a community". The Narrative continues by defining ASEAN Identity as "a process of social construct defined by a balanced combination of 'Constructed Values' and 'Inherited Values' that will strengthen the ASEAN Community".

At the same time, a parallel project of the ASEAN Secretariat sought to define and measure awareness, values, and identity of ASEAN amongst youth across the region, as part of a broader development of an ASEAN Youth Development Index. A key recommendation of that project, drawing on findings of a survey conducted across the ten ASEAN Member States, was to hone in on a "values-oriented identity." The authors of the project report concluded that ASEAN Identity is not constructed and understood by youth in the region as signifying that the peoples of ASEAN were all "the same kind of people" (as "identity" is often understood). Rather, ASEAN Identity is better understood as identification with a shared set of values – including valuing the diversity and differences of the peoples of Southeast Asia.

... what, if anything, are "ASEAN values"? How would we identify such values? How are they to be understood and how are they to be cultivated?

These recent documents produced by ASEAN both point to the importance of cultivating certain values among the citizens of ASEAN – especially among the up-and-coming generations in the region. But this raises the question – what, if anything, are "ASEAN values"? How would we identify such values? How are they to be understood and how are they to be cultivated?

This essay seeks to suggest ways in which we can productively approach these questions. It does not presume to declare nor to dictate what values are ASEAN values (or not ASEAN values). Rather, the author here is offering suggestions on how to approach these questions, based on his training in anthropology and Southeast Asian studies as well as his experiences of the past three decades living, working, and conducting research in the region.

ASEAN values, this essay argues, are not something already clearly delineated, which can simply be taught by rote to the region's youth. Rather, those of us committed to the ASEAN project should seek to develop an understanding of ASEAN values that critically reflects on both the "constructed" and "inherited" values of ASEAN the organisation as well as Southeast Asia more broadly.[i]

The Narrative of ASEAN Identity's framing of values in terms of "constructed" and "inherited" values is extremely useful. But here, I wish to go further in thinking through what the constructed and inherited nature of values means, and how it can point us in the direction of developing a more robust "values-oriented identity" amongst citizens of ASEAN.

The Narrative mainly uses the framework of "constructed and inherited values" to delineate between the values that have explicitly been adopted and propagated by ASEAN as an organisation since its founding more than a half-century ago and the "inherited values" of Southeast Asia's many distinct societies and cultures, the product of centuries of accumulated cultural knowledge and interactions. Of course, as ASEAN moves into its second half-century, its "constructed" values will be inherited by new generations and the "inherited" values of ASEAN societies are always in the process of being (re)constructed anew in every generation. A critical approach to ASEAN values – as is being argued for in this essay - suggests avenues for uncovering both the inheritance and construction of pan-regional values.

First, attention to the values of ASEAN as an organisation can productively focus on understanding the context in which they were adopted and their ongoing relevance, and legitimate debates regarding their sustained significance. Many of the values espoused in ASEAN's founding charter as well as subsequent reiteration of commitments to ASEAN grew out of mid-twentieth century global discourses. These include commitments to United Nations conventions on human rights, and ASEAN as a nuclear weapons-free and drug-free zone. They also emphasised post-colonial, nationalist principles of cooperation and non-interference in the affairs of other nations.

The founding values of ASEAN are not things that should be easily disregarded, but neither are they necessarily fixed in stone for all time

These have continually been challenged and debated, most recently for example, with regard to the maintenance of democratic norms in several ASEAN member states or in the move toward cannabis legalisation in Thailand. The founding values of ASEAN are not things that should be easily disregarded, but neither are they necessarily fixed in stone for all time. An open dialogue should be encouraged, such that values are not blindly followed but are positively and thoughtfully reaffirmed – or refined – by each new generation of ASEAN citizens.

ASEAN citizens could benefit from learning comparatively from each other the sorts of values of different cultures of the region and the consequences of such values

The same is true for the inherited values of ASEAN societies. In this respect, the ASEAN Secretariat and ASEAN Foundation (which focuses on social-cultural aspects of the ASEAN Community) should consider setting an agenda for researching, cataloguing, critiquing, and propagating ASEAN and Southeast Asian values (e.g. through publications, workshops, presentations, seminars, etc.). Given the diversity of the region, there are many diverse values across different societies. ASEAN citizens could benefit from learning comparatively from each other the sorts of values of different cultures of the region and the consequences of such values.

Again, the goal here is not to come up with a definitive “canon” of inherited values, but rather provide a space for citizens of the region to learn about the intersection of various inherited values and how they have shaped the cultures and societies of the region. In terms of developing such an agenda, the role of artists, educators, and others in expressing, teaching, and learning, ASEAN values needs to be considered. Collaboration with creators in various traditional arts, modern creative arts, and new media (e.g. YouTube creators) should be sought, as well as primary, secondary, and tertiary teachers (e.g. at universities, but also pesantren and other forms of schooling).

In this endeavour, we can look to recent trends in global anthropology, toward an “anthropology of the good” (Robbins 2013). Such work looks at how people in different cultures construct and pursue ideas of “the good,” with attention to cross-cultural values and morality. Such ideas and approaches should of course be developed and localised within Southeast Asia. Collaborations across the ASEAN University Network, among scholars in the social sciences and humanities would be productive in this respect. Many universities in Southeast Asia have developed robust programs in modern social science, which is well-suited to organising research on these matters. Scholars in the humanities – in literature, the arts, and history among others, would also be crucial to this project. Inclusion of the Departments/Ministries of Education and teacher-training institutes is also important to consider how research that makes ASEAN and Southeast Asian values more explicit can translate into valuable teaching material, especially at primary and secondary school levels.

Finally, it should be stressed again that this agenda for ASEAN values is not envisioned as an agenda seeking to build a fixed cannon of values. It would be a fool’s errand to try to reach closure with a “definitive” list or statement of “ASEAN” or “Southeast Asian” values. Rather this is a practical and discursive agenda. Practical in that it is ultimately aimed at propagating such values as it identifies as positive ASEAN values. Discursive in that it is not a monologue. ASEAN values will emerge and continually (at least have the potential to) change over time through dialogue. Part of an increasingly robust ASEAN Community should include greater awareness across the region of the different values of different Southeast Asian societies. It should also include space for new generations of ASEAN citizens to engage with their inherited values and seek to (re)construct new configurations of values appropriate to the times.

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[i] The term “critical reflection” or “critical thinking” is often misinterpreted. It does not mean (negative) criticism. Rather, it means thinking that does not blindly accept any proposal but weighs and assesses various arguments and evidence as a means to come to a better, more robust understanding of the world.

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Regional Identity and the Promotion of Regional Citizenship in ASEAN, Mercosur, and the African Union

Prof Luis Cabrera

Regional organisations have increasingly turned to regional citizenship as a vehicle for promoting a common identity and sense of attachment across member state populations. This article compares such efforts undertaken by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), South America's Mercosur, and the African Union.

While the three organisations are distinct from one another in several ways, they share some key features that make it natural to compare their efforts in developing a regional citizenship regime. For example, each covers a vast geographic area that for hundreds of years was largely subject to European imperialism and colonialism. Each organisation and its regional predecessors is longstanding, dating back to at least the early 1960s, just after the founding of the body that would evolve into the European Union (EU). The EU is commonly cited as the most "supranational" of regional organisations, meaning the one exercising the greatest governance capacity. Each of the other three is less strongly empowered. Yet, like the European Union, each one seeks to advance the production of an ambitious range of public goods in its region. Those goods include economic and political development, peace and security, and human development goods such as education and health care. Each organisation has turned to the promotion of a common regional identity via regional citizenship as an important means of helping it achieve such governance aims.

Citizenship is understood here as having several central elements, at the domestic, regional, and even global levels.[i] These elements include an understanding of what binds citizens together, such as a common language, culture, history, geography, ideals, governance institutions. They also include an understanding of the rights and duties of citizenship and the presumed substance or purpose of citizenship, which orients those rights and duties. The substance provides guidance on what it would mean to be a "good citizen." Finally, the status and institutions of citizenship refer to the markers of citizen standing and the political institutions to back that standing. Regional citizens, for example, may carry regional passports entitling them to concrete free movement or other rights, or regional citizenship may be more informal, tied to emerging practices within regional institutions.

The following focuses primarily on common identity, or Element 1: what is presumed to bind regional citizens. It also examines the status and institutions of regional

citizenship – how formal or informal a citizenship each organisation is promoting, and how each is promoting it. The discussion is informed by interviews conducted with organisational staff and civil society organisations at ASEAN (2017-22), Mercosur (2019), and the African Union (2023). I also draw on documents and promotional materials produced by the organisations.

Mercosur

I will begin with the Common Market of the South (Mercosur), as the organisation of the three that has travelled the farthest toward formalising regional citizenship. Mercosur was founded in the early 1990s as a successor to other treaty-based regional integration initiatives dating to the early 1960s. It is headquartered in Montevideo, Uruguay, and currently includes four full members – Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay – with a population of more than 270 million. Bolivia has been in the process of acceding to full membership, and several other countries are associate members and party to various agreements. Venezuela had been a full member but was suspended indefinitely in 2017 over concerns surrounding human rights and adherence to regional trade rules.

In terms of promoting a common identity and sense of regional citizenship, Mercosur gives strong emphasis to the citizenship statute

The Mercosur Regional Citizenship Statute was formally implemented in 2021, after being introduced in 2010. It is effectively an umbrella agreement bringing together existing regional instruments, each of which grants significant formal rights to citizens of Mercosur member states. Those instruments include the Mercosur Residence Agreement, which affirms regional free movement, or the right to live and work in any state that is party to it. That Agreement covers nine of the 12 South American countries, including the four Mercosur member states and five associate members, representing a total population of more than 400 million. The citizenship statute also encompasses portable state retirement benefits and the cross-border recognition of educational qualifications, among other rights and provisions. The status of regional citizens is indicated in the label “Mercosur” appearing on member state passports, alongside country names.

In terms of promoting a common identity and sense of regional citizenship, Mercosur gives strong emphasis to the citizenship statute. That is, it does not put its primary focus on cultural, religious or other affinities that might be said to bind South Americans in a common identity. Instead, it highlights the tangible benefits offered by the Statute, using the language of individual rights. For example, in the primary public-facing document promoting Mercosur citizenship, it frames the Statute’s formal citizenship rights as reflecting the organisation’s broader commitment to fundamental human rights and liberties.[ii] Thus, Mercosur gives primary rhetorical emphasis to commonly held ideals as a potential binding force in its promotion of a common citizenship and identity.

The African Union

The African Union (AU) was launched in 2002 as a successor to the Organisation of African Unity. Headquartered in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, it has 55 member states and a total population of around 1.4 billion. The African Union does not have a formal citizenship statute, but it is seeking to formalise some significant aspects of regional citizenship. Those include most notably a Free Movement Protocol and a common African Union Passport. Both are listed, alongside such initiatives as the African Union Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), as flagship projects of Agenda 2063, the organisation's comprehensive plan for the next several decades.

... African regional identity rests on distinctive traditions of Pan-Africanism that date back well over a century

However, progress toward formalising those initiatives has been inconsistent. For example, the AfCFTA had been ratified by 46 member states through April 2023 – far more than the 22 it had needed to begin implementation. By contrast, the Free Movement Protocol, despite being signed by a majority of AU member states, had seen only four ratifications. Likewise, the AU passport, launched in 2016, had seen only a limited rollout, mostly amongst diplomats. Thus, while the African Union has aimed to formalise important elements of regional citizenship, it has faced some significant challenges in implementation.

In terms of what might be said to bind AU regional citizens together, African regional identity rests on distinctive traditions of Pan-Africanism that date back well over a century. Early Pan-Africanists, including American social thinker and activist W.E.B. DuBois, called for unity among African people and those like himself who had been born into the African diaspora. He helped organise several Pan-African Congresses beginning in 1900. The Organisation of African Unity (1963-2002) and its successor African Union have explicitly invoked the spirit of Pan-Africanism as a foundation for regional integration. For example, in its publication "Agenda 2063: Popular Version," the African Union Commission says "We echo the Pan-African call that Africa must unite in order to realise its Renaissance."[iii] Some of those interviewed noted that genuine Pan-African sentiment or identity can be thin in practice. The tradition does, however, set the African Union apart from organisations such as ASEAN and to a large extent Mercosur, which do not have similarly prominent unifying ideologies distinctive to their regions.

The organisation, however, does not promote a specific African Union citizenship in the way the other two promote ASEAN and Mercosur citizenship, for example, via social media posts. Instead, it typically refers in its documents and declarations to "African citizens" and citizenship. Nor has it taken up the call of such prominent Pan-Africanists as then-Ghanaian President Kwame Nkrumah, who in his 1963 speech at the launch of the OAU, called for "A Commission to make proposals for a Common African Citizenship." Thus, unlike Mercosur in 2010, the AU has not publicised plans for a citizenship statute or expressly sought to promote the development of one.

ASEAN

ASEAN, based in Jakarta, Indonesia, was founded in 1967 by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. It has grown to encompass 10 member states and a total population of more than 630 million, with Timor-Leste on track to become the 11th member. ASEAN was designed initially as a vehicle for promoting regional peace and security amid Cold War tensions. It has evolved into a comprehensive regional organisation undertaking a wide range of governance activities grouped into three main pillars or communities: the Political-Security Community, Economic Community, and Socio-Cultural Community.

As it has evolved, ASEAN has made the citizens of member states more central to its governance rhetoric and aims, as seen for example in the 2015 Kuala Lumpur Declaration on a People-Oriented, People-Centred ASEAN.[iv] More recently this emphasis can be seen in the ASEAN Secretariat directly addressing and referring to "ASEAN citizens" in social medial posts, in The ASEAN magazine, polls conducted by the organisation, and numerous other places. For example, the 2020 publication titled In Conversation with ASEAN Citizens was introduced by then - ASEAN Secretary-General Lim Jock Hoi as "celebrat[ing] the people of ASEAN and their inspiring stories of perseverance, ingenuity, and dedication towards building a better future for the region."[v]

ASEAN also has been highly proactive in the complementary promotion of a common regional identity, as mandated in the 2008 ASEAN Charter. Article 35 states that "ASEAN shall promote its common ASEAN identity and a sense of belonging among its peoples to achieve its shared destiny goals and values." Article 36 then enshrines the ASEAN Motto: "One Vision, One Identity, One Community." ASEAN seeks to promote such a vision of unity in a region marked by a high diversity of languages and cultures, and a relatively low sense of common regional identification historically. Its identity promotion challenges are thus more acute in some ways than those of the other two organisations.

Prominent efforts toward addressing the challenges include the development and publication of the "Narrative of ASEAN Identity," adopted at the organisation's 37th Summit in 2020. The Narrative highlights essential aspects of the regional identity to be promoted, and how. First, ASEAN identity is to be understood as composed of both "inherited" elements – regional cultural affinities and shared history – and constructed ones. The latter are presented as shared values corresponding to the three ASEAN pillars: political, economic, and socio-cultural. The narrative outlines identity promotion efforts focused at both the elite and more local levels.

First, “It is a top-down approach determined by ASEAN leaders through extensive consultations with people in the region, an explicit push factor which implicitly contains visions, goals and targets that the ASEAN Community seeks to achieve by 2025.” It is also “a down-to-earth narrative where its implementation process will embrace all ASEAN citizens, especially those at the grass root levels, in ways to … make ASEAN more relevant in their lives, as well as allow them to reap the benefits of being part of the ASEAN Community.”[vii]

ASEAN has been perhaps the most proactive of the three organisations in seeking to promote a sense of regional identity and citizenship. At the same time, however, its regional citizenship regime is the least formalised of the three. ASEAN does not have a formal citizenship statute or publicly stated plans to develop one, nor has it stated plans for a free movement regional mobility protocol, regional passport, etc. The organisation has taken more limited steps, including working to ease visa requirements for citizens of member states and to increase regional student mobility. It has sought to harmonise the recognition of educational qualifications across borders and establish some common principles for the protection of migrants in the region, while also putting in place structures for engagement with regional civil society organisations. Overall, however, ASEAN has seen the emergence of fewer informal citizenship practices and formal citizen rights than the other two organisations.

ASEAN has been perhaps the most proactive of the three organisations in seeking to promote a sense of regional identity and citizenship

Conclusion

The above has sketched some of the key features of the still-emergent citizenship regimes in Mercosur, the African Union, and ASEAN. Each organisation has given more rhetorical and substantive emphasis in recent years to the development of regional citizenship. This has been part of broader efforts to encourage citizens of member states to identify with and develop loyalties to the organisations, to help them achieve their governance aims.

The emphasis here has been on how far the organisations have sought to formalise some central aspects or elements of citizenship, including citizenship rights and status, as represented in common passports, etc. It also has been on regional identity in the citizenship frame – what is presumed to bind regional citizens together and could serve as a basis for generating attachment and loyalties to regional institutions.

Mercosur, it was shown, seeks to promote a regional identity not by highlighting South American religious and cultural affinities, but by focusing on the specific citizen rights principles enshrined in the Mercosur Citizenship Statute. By contrast, the African Union foregrounds long traditions of Pan-African activism and ideology, though it is relatively less proactive in actually promoting a common regional citizenship and identity than the other two. ASEAN is the most proactive, reaching out to “ASEAN citizens” in various ways, and devoting significant effort to possibilities for constructing a regional identity, though its actual citizenship regime is the least formalised.

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ASEAN Identity: A Voice of Reason

Dr John Vong, Dr Tim Nielander

There is a great need for a united voice of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) to speak up and to bring focus regional efforts of peace and prosperity. The clarion call is motivated by a need to engage with the chorus of disjointed communications at the current time that brings discord and may devitalise the strength of ASEAN identity. The ASEAN voice may be proclaimed in three propositions: (1) pride in our industrious efforts resulting in production of refined items and materials, (2) a deep regard for nature and the beauty of its varied terrains, flora and fauna, and (3) the belief in human creativity and activities that help transcend borders. These themes can form the basis of an ASEAN message to unite citizens, reflecting an appreciation of shared, connected, and peaceful progress.

... a united voice of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) to speak up and to bring focus regional efforts of peace and prosperity

It is a given mandate that the emergence of ASEAN is caused by a need to quicken economic growth, together with social progress and cultural development through which ASEAN's strengths materialise. Underlying the main objective is the shared goal to promote ASEAN regional peace and stability broadly framed within the rule of law and the principles of the UN (United Nations) Charter. Despite ASEAN's rich diversity, encompassing hundreds of ethnic groups, a multitude of languages and dialects, and a population of 686,619,871 spread across ten countries spanning 4.5 million square kilometres, the region has lived up to its growth ambitions. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has estimated that the growth of ASEAN is 4.7% in 2023 and 5% in 2024.[i] It is hard to ignore that ASEAN has the third largest population in the world, after China and India. As a single market, ASEAN represents the third largest in the world integrating with global supply chains and playing a key part of the global economy. In recent decades, the growth of ASEAN is driven by interactions regionally and globally. The World Economic Forum forecasts that ASEAN will add 140 million new consumers by 2030,[ii] and we note that a new member state Timor-Leste will be added to the regional initiative in the future. To stay on an even keel toward shared economic growth and joint prosperity, ASEAN must emerge with a strong harmonious voice of unity and identity.

To stay on an even keel toward shared economic growth and joint prosperity, ASEAN must emerge with a strong harmonious voice of unity and identity

As in most economic blocs, there are forces of collaboration and competition. A case in point is the European Union (EU), where the entry of Britain was created friction as did its exit. Maybe the analogy is uneven when drawing comparisons with ASEAN as the EU was attempting to create a supranational mandate of political and monetary accord. However, collaboration and competition in the ASEAN context provides opportunity for greater unity of vision and voice.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership is another example of international actions which impact the hopes and aspirations of ASEAN. Without reasoned judgments and well-informed deliberations, free trade agreements can depreciate ASEAN's objectives and potential. ASEAN's non-interference policy in the domestic affairs of its 10-member states presents a point of concurrence and of contention in the region. There is a tacit trust that each member state will have the capacity to manage its own affairs no matter the level of divergence on the political spectrum. For trust to be maintained in the region, there is a deep understanding that member states can work quietly with their neighbouring members to seek resolution of issues for the benefit of the ASEAN community. Discussion of transportation routes and connectivity designs, defence exercises, and joint policing have yielded remarkable gains for the region. Even trade relations have helped member countries achieve remarkable milestones.

Regional political and policy discourse reflects ASEAN's ambitions and touch and may shape the core of national priorities and policies. ASEAN member states are at different stages of development - as such there should be an adaptation of unifying pathways, sensitive to the cultural and development contexts of the different member states. And diplomacy is the key, to bring common understanding through shared and refined communications at the fore. This is where ASEAN's identity can best display its regional strengthening proposition. There are growing opportunities to demonstrate how and why an ASEAN identity is relevant to regional collaboration and global relevance.

We have the existential threat of natural disasters caused by climate change. Each ASEAN member state may have differing approaches to accept, adapt and mitigate climate uncertainty. Indeed, each member state has differing levels of capacity to manage climate change. As it is a global challenge, can ASEAN be the first collaboration initiative to address the challenge at the regional level? As an initial step, perhaps there could be an ASEAN taxonomy for the green economy concepts and objectives, for example in connection with a reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Can the ASEAN identity be purposefully united through shared messages and take a proactive step forward in developing the concept of a climate-smart regional endeavour?

The ASEAN identity is best placed to amplify its declarations of neutrality

Other existential threats such as geo-political manoeuvres may harm the region, but there are ASEAN protections already in place. The Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) declaration of 1971 and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) of 1976 to ensure that the principles of peaceful coexistence are maintained. The ASEAN members are well-positioned to provide strengthen this voice of reason. The ASEAN identity is best placed to amplify its declarations of neutrality.

How is the ASEAN identity perceived? It can be characterised by its passion for peace, arising out of a colonial systems and conflict. Given the dire periods of hunger and armed conflict during and post colonisation, the search and preference for peaceful coexistence and shared development is most understandable. ASEAN is unique in the search for economic empowerment because the starting point was one of resource inadequacy. Most ASEAN member states started with constraints at the time each gained independence. The ASEAN personality is exemplified by its evolution – growing peacefully and gradually – into integrated participation and contribution to global economic and political discourse. ASEAN is a growing market of youthful consumers, digital entrepreneurs, and a workforce that any innovative collaborators needs in the region. It is the character, personality and uniqueness that ASEAN exemplifies – and which makes it a key contributor to the global order. With a strong identity, the voice of ASEAN can contribute to international conversations above the sometime confused messages and bickering. The next generation of ASEAN leaders must rise up and embolden a shared identity through a voice carrying common messages.

The ASEAN voice can amplify shared objectives and call for greater resources to promote educational and entrepreneurial programs to encourage technological and skills advancements. A strengthened identify can enable ASEAN's shared work ethic and industrious approach to creating products and services of world-class quality and artistic refinement.

A strong ASEAN identity can encourage tourism, conservation, and appreciative management of ASEAN's varied landscapes and natural resources for sustainability and beauty. The ASEAN voice can promote the shared results of creative activities from communities across geographical and ethnic landscapes. ASEAN's identity reflects innovation and synthesis of cultural expressions of peace and a shared appreciation of common human aspirations in the region. That identity can and will be strengthened through dialogue, diplomacy and a shared vision.

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Cultural Cooperation with ASEAN Through the Expansion of the Korean Wave

Dr Sieun Kim

With the international success of K-pop and Korean films, the Korean wave spread and increased its influence. It has become a source of Korea's pride and identity, one that connects its past and contemporary culture

The Korean Wave, which started in the 1990s in the arena of cultural competition between countries, gradually received more attention, and reached a new turning point in late 2012 with the global popularity of Psy's Gangnam Style. Since then, a Korean boyband called BTS has become an even bigger phenomenon, topping pop charts around the world. Throughout 2018 and 2019, BTS set multiple records at various awards such as the American Music Awards and dominated the global music charts including the US Billboard. Their three albums also topped Billboard 200 in less than a year, a milestone surpassed only by The Beatles according to world pop music history.

In addition, Parasite by director Bong Joon-ho, won four Academy Awards in 2020 and received worldwide acclaim. It made the world pay attention to the success of the popular culture of Korea, a small country in East Asia, in gaining universal appeal, recognition and love.[i] With the international success of K-pop and Korean films, the Korean wave spread and increased its influence. It has become a source of Korea's pride and identity, one that connects its past and contemporary culture.

The spread of the Korean wave has economic consequences: it resulted in the significant growth of Korea's cultural content exports. Sales in the content industry grew steadily at an average annual rate of 4.9% from 2012 to 2016, compared to the 3.1% year-on-year growth rate of the domestic economy in 2017 and the annual average growth rate of 1.5% for all industries from 2012 to 2016 (Korea Creative Content Agency 2019).[ii] These are noteworthy figures.

So why is the Korean wave important to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)? The reasons vary. First, the ASEAN region was the starting point of the Korean wave and where it continues to exert influence. According to the 2020 National Image Survey Report, published in December 2020 by the Korean Overseas Culture and Information Service under the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism's, a total of 8,000 people (7,500 foreigners) of 500 people in each country (7,500 foreigners) of 20 or more in 16 major countries, including Korea, were surveyed online from 2018.[iii]

The survey found that “contemporary culture,” such as K-Pop, movies, and dramas, was the most frequently encountered aspect of Korean culture. Among the 10 ASEAN countries, Indonesia and Thailand were included in the survey, with 93.2% of Indonesian participants and 91.4% of Thai participants responding that they had encountered modern Korean culture, accounting for the highest rate among the 16 countries represented in the survey.

In addition, according to the 2019 Global Hallyu Status survey, published by the Korea Foundation in December 2019, Singapore showed a phenomenal growth of 1,026% in Hallyu club membership from 2018.[iv] According to the 2022 ASEAN-Korea Youth Mutual Perspective Survey, published by the ASEAN-Korea Center, when asked about images that come to mind when thinking of Korea, all ASEAN youth, regardless of where they live, thought of things related to the Korean wave (entertainment), such as K-pop and drama.[v]

... there is ample possibility that ASEAN can act as a focal point that can spread a positive attitude towards the Korean wave to the international community

The second reason why the Korean wave is important to ASEAN is that the Korean government is significantly strengthening the level of cooperation with the ASEAN region. The Korean government’s New Southern Policy announced in 2017 aimed to build a people-centred community of peace and prosperity between ASEAN and Korea, raising ASEAN cooperation to the same level as the four major global powers. This policy is a key tool for enhancing Korea's soft power. ASEAN-centred policy continued even after a change in government, announced Korea-ASEAN Solidarity Initiative (KASI) in 2022. The close cooperation of the 10 ASEAN countries, reflected in their strategy of ASEAN Centrality, allows them to exert great influence in the international community to the extent that they stand shoulder-to-shoulder with advanced countries. Therefore, there is ample possibility that ASEAN can act as a focal point that can spread a positive attitude towards the Korean wave to the international community.

Since many developed countries, such as the United States, China, Japan, and the European Union, are pursuing stronger relations with ASEAN, it is also important for Korea, which became a dialogue partner of ASEAN in 1989 to develop closer ties with ASEAN amid fierce competition from advanced countries. In this context, the Korean Wave can be a valuable asset for Korea to underscore its strengths and uniqueness.

Lastly, ASEAN is a potential partner of Korea in the field of popular culture and content industries since ASEAN is developing its own framework, collectively and at the national level. Korea should view ASEAN as a partner for exchange and cooperation in the field of culture and arts and not just as a market for its cultural content. Cultural value occupies an important area in the conception of the ASEAN socio-cultural community, which aims to improve the quality of life and form a common ASEAN identity (Moon et al. 2019).[vi] It is necessary for Korea to pay attention to this value.

South Korea must comprehensively evaluate whether the Korean wave – the attraction of Korea – is appropriately reflected in the Korean government's policies and policies toward ASEAN. It must also examine whether two-way exchanges are properly conducted, and whether appropriate projects are being carried out through public-private cooperation

In the case of the ASEAN content market, there are differences by country, but in general, it is gradually evolving. According to the content market size and view 2015-2024 by country provided by the Korea Creative Content Agency in 2020, 16th in Indonesia, 17th in Thailand, 24th in the Philippines, 25th in Malaysia, 27th in Viet Nam, and 29th in Singapore, showing their influence in the content market distribution.[vii]

South Korea must comprehensively evaluate whether the Korean wave – the attraction of Korea – is appropriately reflected in the Korean government's policies and policies toward ASEAN. It must also examine whether two-way exchanges are properly conducted, and whether appropriate projects are being carried out through public-private cooperation. These are ways to check the effectiveness of the Korean Wave in ASEAN and encourage a forward momentum for developing ASEAN-ROK relations.

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Portrayal and Perceptions of ASEAN in Western Media: A Youth Perspective

Kar Lok Pang, Tasia Matthews

ASEAN representation in Western media has remained few and far between. This lack of representation — in terms of ASEAN actors, stories, or even environments — contributes to an overall dissonance in self-identity experienced by ASEAN - identifying youths growing up in the United States and other Western countries. From a Western perspective, the lack of representation in the media that we are most immediately surrounded by amplifies feelings of foreignness and liminal experience associated with being members of the ASEAN diaspora.[i] This means that first and second generation immigrants in Western countries who ethnically identify with any of the ASEAN member states are unable to develop a shared identity, connection, or sense of belonging with the concept of ASEAN. For the ASEAN diaspora, feelings of being invisible or Othered are common, and a general sentiment of "I'm not Asian enough for Asia, and I'm not American enough for America" persists.[ii]

Without meaningful depictions of these to serve as a cultural guide and source of pride, it is often only due to a long and deeply intimate personal journey that ASEAN - identifying youths are able to build strong connections with our own heritages, let alone with the ASEAN community as a whole

Further complicating this experience is the tendency for Western media to lump all ASEAN nations together, incapable of separating the distinct cultures and national identities in any comprehensive or authentic way. Without meaningful depictions of these to serve as a cultural guide and source of pride, it is often only due to a long and deeply intimate personal journey that ASEAN-identifying youths are able to build strong connections with our own heritages, let alone with the ASEAN community as a whole. As the ASEAN region becomes more prominent in news media due to rising coverage of geopolitical events, it will be pertinent for real-world depictions to be coupled with authentic, nuanced, and positive portrayals of ASEAN people, histories, and livelihoods in popular culture, so as to enhance cross-cultural understanding.

ASEAN Portrayal in Television and Films

A cursory review of ASEAN representation in Western television and film reveals the lack of genuine representation. Even when ethnically ASEAN actors get roles, they are limited to roles written for (usually Chinese or Japanese) East Asian characters. Short Round, a canonically Chinese character played by Vietnamese-American actor Ke Huy Quan in *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* (1984), is one of the earliest examples in recent cinematic history. The 1951 Broadway musical and subsequent 1956 film The King and I had a cast of Thai characters, but these roles were all given to Westerners. Further, the film's depiction of Thailand and the royal family has been continuously criticised for historical inaccuracy. In the late twentieth century, ASEAN representation rose slightly,

following the prominence of the Viet Nam and Korean Wars in the Western psyche. Even so, these depictions portrayed harsh, jungle environments, and rundown villages in extreme poverty, with locals relegated to savage, aggressive caricatures — reductive, Orientalising accounts that became a prominent mainstay of the conception of "Southeast Asia" in Western minds.

Without fully-developed characters and storylines with which to visually portray ASEAN narratives, "ASEAN" as a collective or individual identity remains unable to flourish in a media landscape that renders it invisible

Possibly one of the biggest films set in an ASEAN nation in recent times, 2018's Crazy Rich Asians caused an internet sensation with its larger-than-life depictions of the Singaporean Chinese ultra-rich elite. However, ASEAN representation was limited to the setting, and not much depicted the typical lifestyle of an average Singaporean. Too often, Southeast Asia is utilised for its exotic and tropical locales, exploited as nothing more than a pretty backdrop by which non-ASEAN characters unravel the plot. Thailand is a recurring victim: box office hits The Beach (2000), The Hangover Part II (2011), The Impossible (2012), and Only God Forgives (2013) all take place in the country but focus exclusively on Western character storylines. Another attempt to highlight the beauty of Southeast Asia was made through Disney's 2021 animated film, Raya and the Last Dragon, which depicts a fantasy world heavily inspired by Southeast Asian cultures, legends, and motifs. Yet, similar to its counterparts, the film was criticised both for its low employment of Southeast Asian vocal actors and its fusing of distinct cultures into a jumbled mess that further fails to distinguish Southeast Asian nations adequately. Without fully-developed characters and storylines with which to visually portray ASEAN narratives, "ASEAN" as a collective or individual identity remains unable to flourish in a media landscape that renders it invisible.

ASEAN Portrayal in Literature

Many of the aforementioned films are adapted from novels, and the publishing industry continues to be fraught with inequalities. Just as "Asian" in the Western psyche is predominantly East Asian, ASEAN is scarcely represented beyond Vietnamese authors, which is yet another complication of colonial roots that problematises the issue today. Even when ASEAN writers publish against the odds, they become bogged down by expectations (legitimate or otherwise) that they must tap upon their ASEAN roots and cultural ties to produce their work. Such expectations mire the creative process and unfairly commodify ASEAN identities as marketing tools. Concomitantly, ASEAN writers struggle to contend with their own identities, in deciding whether or not, and how to represent their ethnicity in their work. On the one hand, representation is beneficial for readers who see themselves reflected and legitimised in their own lived experiences. On the other hand, although artists have to mine their identities to some extent in producing creative pieces, the general difficulty of publishing for Asian writers places an unfair burden on them to sell their literal bodily identities as capital and for (predominantly foreign) profit.

As discussed, the advent of popular Asian movies, even as they improve ASEAN visibility in popular culture, draws upon tropes and caricatures that are not so representative as they are harmful to ASEAN existence. Although it is right that we celebrate the hitherto never-before-seen achievements made possible by generations of ASEAN creatives paving the way and overcoming structural boundaries, questioning how the limited ASEAN representation in Western media stereotypes and misrepresents the nuanced cultural identities embedded within "ASEAN" becomes an issue of survivorhood. For there to be a future where ASEAN identities can thrive, the ASEAN community must collectively demand pluralistic and authentic representation in Western media, both as consumers and as the subjects of mis/underrepresentation.

A Way Forward?

In the present day, there is hope. Recent portrayals of ASEAN people, culture, and environments have brought these to life where before they were nothing more than set pieces. In the second episode of the ongoing 2023 HBO drama series The Last of Us, based on the titular 2013 video game, the screen opens on pre-apocalypse Jakarta. Minor depictions of everyday life in Jakarta, including traffic, a local restaurant, and a small cast of characters speaking in Bahasa Indonesia, humanise the city, culture, and people to a Western audience who may otherwise remain unfamiliar with Indonesia. Considering the global pervasiveness of Western media and the fact that more than one-third of the Asian-American population ethnically identifies as ASEAN, there is clearly an appetite for diverse stories. Diversification — as well as improved, nuanced portrayals of ASEAN narratives and even minutiae — is likely attributed to the contributions of diverse identities entering the writers room. If production companies pay attention to the wants of a burgeoning audience, responsively hire writers, producers, and actors from the same previously underrepresented communities, and invest in the stories we missed out on in our childhoods, the collective ASEAN identity will have the propensity to rise even for those growing up in the diaspora.

Within academic circles, there are also encouraging signs recognising ASEAN as an understudied region and identity. For instance, Queer-of-colour critique is acknowledged as an understudied field for uncovering the ways in which liberalism is complicit with exclusion and domination in non-Western/White settings.[iii] These efforts not only enhance visibility and produce economic revenue for existing industries, but improve sociocultural awareness of the richness of distinct ASEAN identities. As such, increased ASEAN representation, for all its problems, is nevertheless a positive indicator of what can be done better in forging ASEAN identities beyond geographical boundaries.

Conclusion

Overall, issues with ASEAN representation — both underrepresentation and misrepresentation — persist in the film and publishing industries, despite the monumental goals we have surpassed and continued to push through as a community. This is often compounded by political and social expectations of ASEAN-identifying creatives and what they should or should not embody in their craft. That said, there are encouraging signs that point to the prospect of a future where ASEAN identities can take centre stage, in reflecting the region's cultural diversity, media appetite, and potential to elevate visibility of minorities. To this end, we should celebrate and advocate for genuine, nuanced portrayals of ASEAN in Western media, and develop accountability mechanisms to ensure faithful representation.

... we should celebrate and advocate for genuine, nuanced portrayals of ASEAN in Western media, and develop accountability mechanisms to ensure faithful representation

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KONNECT ASEAN: Connecting Cultures, Hearts & Minds

Benjamin Hampe

For over half a century, ASEAN has played a crucial role in fostering connectivity and unity among our publics through art and culture. In a world where competing forces vie for attention and influence, the enduring bonds nurtured by ASEAN through imagery and imagination remain essential to shaping our shared destiny.

Amidst the challenges posed by the pandemic, the ASEAN Foundation embarked on an ambitious cultural diplomacy initiative titled KONNECT ASEAN, made possible with the support of the ASEAN Senior Officials for the Culture and the Arts (SOMCA) and ASEAN-Korea Cooperation Fund (AKCF). Recognising the importance of solidarity and connectivity within the arts community, particularly in the face of travel restrictions and economic uncertainties, this initiative was designed to leverage the skills and expertise inherent in the regional visual arts sector.

The visual arts, a universal language, has the power to transcend borders and bridge differences. Through KONNECT ASEAN, artists, creatives, and arts organisations in ASEAN nations and Korea are enabled to create meaningful connections and dialogues, cultivating an environment of shared creativity, inspiration and understanding. By supporting the talents and perspectives of artists across the region, we promote a sense of pride and appreciation for our cultures while fostering collaboration.

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In direct response to the pandemic, the KONNECT ASEAN Creative Futures Dialogue was launched in 2020 to address a looming "lost generation" of artists and creative professionals. There was deep concern about the dwindling interest in pursuing artistic careers due to the challenges faced by artists in creating, trading, and traveling. The project was in essence a virtual forum in three parts (each session focusing on digital acceleration, social impact, and environmental sustainability respectively) that invited inspirational speakers to provide advice and showcase alternative paths to a creative career.

Partnered with the UNESCO ResiliArt movement, the project took advantage of the online format to engage and inspire the vast community of young digital natives within the ASEAN Foundation network. The response was overwhelming, with not only aspiring creatives attending but also a significant number of young individuals interested in international relations and public policy joining the discussions. This gave us hope, as they represented the new generation that will integrate cultural perspectives into governance and national development.

(1) KONNECT ASEAN Creative Futures Dialogue, Insights from Arts Professionals: Surviving COVID-19 by Going Digital

Another significant project titled Shifting Orientations: Southeast Asia after AfroAsia was devised to connect Southeast Asian and Korean artists to examine lesser-known Cold War histories. Developed by three young curators born at the end of the Cold War and establishment of diplomatic relations between Korea and ASEAN in 1989, this long-term research and curatorial project explored the influence of anti-colonialism on Southeast Asian regionalism. Touchpoints included relationships between Asian heads of state, the Bandung Conference (1955), the Association of South East Asia (1961), and Maphilindo (1963).

The project started with a conference and exhibition in Singapore (NTU ADM Gallery, January 2021), followed by a traveling exhibition in the Philippines (Vargas Museum, September 2021), and Korea (ASEAN Culture House, July 2022). Supported by partners like the Asian Film Archive, Nanyang Technological University (NTU), National Gallery Singapore, NUS Museum and others, the initiative represented the first time for the ASEAN Foundation to examine an expanded and global history of Southeast Asian regionalism.

Shifting Orientations resulted in a Memorandum of Understanding inked between the ASEAN Foundation and Korea Foundation, highlighting the enduring bonds of cultural exchange and the integral role of contemporary arts in international relations and our everyday lives. In shaping the post-Cold War reality of a new world, this research project, conference, exhibitions, and resulting MOU reflected the historical underpinnings of multilateral collaboration and marked the beginning of a new era for cultural relations and regional integration between ASEAN and Korea.

(2) To A Faraway Friend: Beyond Afro-Southeast Asian Affinities, ASEAN Culture House, Busan, Korea

With the resumption of regular travel across the region in 2021, KONNECT ASEAN organised its first in-person conference in collaboration with the NTU Centre for Contemporary Art, Climate Futures #1 - Cultures, Climate Crisis, and Disappearing Ecologies. The conference sought to address the urgent need for new perspectives in the regional response to climate action. Recognising that climate change is a transnational issue requiring collective efforts, the project encouraged collaboration and the sharing of research and projects with the potential to make an impact on the climate crisis in ASEAN and Korea.

The conference brought together artists, arts workers, researchers, and policymakers from ASEAN nations and Korea, highlighting the importance of intercultural relations, regional cooperation and indigenous solutions. With the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta just a stone's throw away from the conference venue serving as a symbol of unity in diversity, we set the tone for striving towards an ASEAN Way for a better future.

(3) Climate Futures #1: Cultures, Climate Crisis and Disappearing Ecologies, Veranda Hotel at Pakubuwono, Jakarta, Indonesia

During our final year of KONNECT ASEAN phase one, we will facilitate a collaborative residency programme between seven print studios in Chiang Mai bringing together young Korean and Southeast Asian artists to produce high-quality prints using traditional printing methods. This project aims to elevate printing techniques and its status in the contemporary art market. By convening artists for a one-month residency in Chiang Mai, the project fosters collaboration and cultural exchange while preserving traditional techniques. The resulting prints will be exhibited at the Chiang Mai City Arts & Cultural Centre and print editions will enter into the permanent collections of the ASEAN Secretariat (Jakarta), ASEAN Cultural Center (Bangkok), and ASEAN Culture House (Busan).

ASEAN's commitment to facilitating people-to-people exchange in the arts sector across Asia has been evident since its establishment. This dedication created a unique space for artistic discourse, fostering pluralistic notions of regional artistic identity and aesthetics. It is indeed one of ASEAN's great legacies. In light of the isolation caused by COVID-19, cultural diplomacy initiatives such as the Chiang Mai print residency play a key role in drawing us out of that isolation, reconnecting us, and laying the foundation for a better future for all. It is a showcase of our region's resilience and determination as we navigate these uncertain times together.

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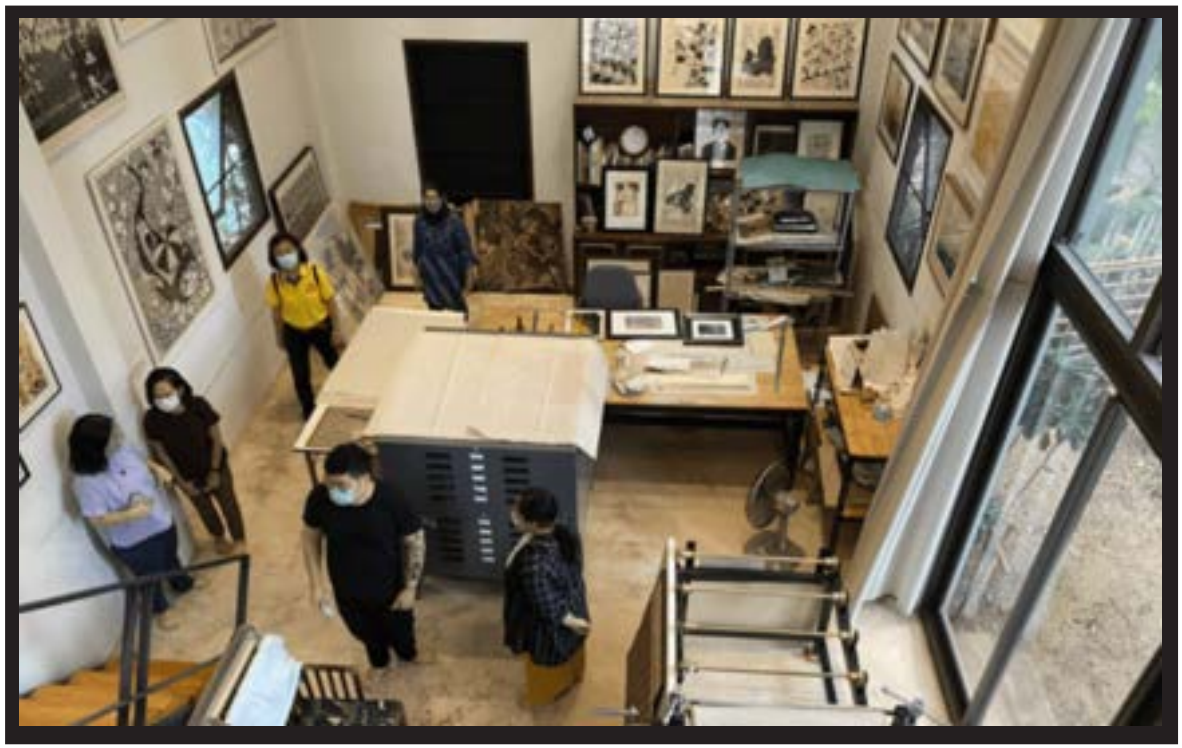
By harnessing the rich cultural tapestry of our diverse and connected communities, our initiative will continue to enhance understanding, collaboration, and mutual appreciation amongst beneficiaries, partners and audiences



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The KONNECT ASEAN project initiative that has transpired over the last four years, exemplifies ASEAN and Korea’s commitment to arts and culture as catalysts for peace, stability, and regional integration.

KONNECT ASEAN has served as a platform to strengthen intergovernmental cooperation and promote goodwill among ASEAN Member States and Korea. By harnessing the rich cultural tapestry of our diverse and connected communities, our initiative will continue to enhance understanding, collaboration, and mutual appreciation amongst beneficiaries, partners and audiences.

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The Makings of the ASEAN Wave: Lessons from Hallyu

Tan Ghee Tiong, Jonathan

From time to time, in conversations on ASEAN Identity, the idea of creating an ASEAN wave (A-wave) will be raised among those in the audience. If anything, the A-wave is envisioned to create the we-feeling of togetherness and deepen the regional sense of belonging among the people of ASEAN through activities that could invariably bring people together. For example, popular culture in the form of music and films that captivates and resonates with audiences far and wide, similar to the Hallyu or Korean wave.

While an A-wave will win the hearts and minds of ASEAN peoples and beyond, is it indeed feasible? If so, how do we create one that is sustained over time? How would it help foster ASEAN identity? And at the heart of it all – what is ASEAN Identity?

Having an awareness of ASEAN has limited bearing on a shared regional identity, nor does a shared sense of ASEAN Identity imply greater knowledge of or about ASEAN

To answer these questions, it may be useful to think about what ASEAN Identity is not. It is not definitive, and there is no singular definition or framing of ASEAN Identity. Furthermore, it cannot be forged the same way as that of a homogenous identity such as that of Hallyu for South Koreans or a regional identity like that of the EU for EU citizens.

ASEAN Identity is also not the same as having an awareness or knowledge of ASEAN. Having an awareness of ASEAN has limited bearing on a shared regional identity, nor does a shared sense of ASEAN Identity imply greater knowledge of or about ASEAN. In other words, you may be aware of ASEAN or have extensive knowledge about ASEAN, but this does not translate to you identifying yourself readily as an ASEAN citizen.

In the report “Understanding How Young People See ASEAN – Awareness, Values and Identity: Exploring the Fifth Domain of the ASEAN Youth Development Index” commissioned by the ASEAN Secretariat, it was highlighted that awareness correlates weakly with identity. However, the report showed that there is a strong nexus between values and identity.[i]

If we follow the premise of a strong correlation between values and identity, then the logical conclusion to follow and frame ASEAN Identity is to ask ourselves what these values are, and how do we amplify the shared values to foster ASEAN Identity.

"The Narrative of ASEAN Identity" adopted at the 37th ASEAN Summit in 2020 identified several layers of values.[ii] Firstly, it regards ASEAN Identity as emanating from the values-based modality of how ASEAN as an inter-governmental entity is organised. These shared institutional values – enshrined in the ASEAN Charter – are respect, peace, security, prosperity, abiding rules of trade and international laws, consensus-building consultation and dialogues, and ASEAN centrality in the conduct of external relations. These institutional values lent themselves to ASEAN as a uniquely distinct entity, making ASEAN second to none.

Secondly, ASEAN Identity is brewed by the peoples' values inherited from our shared history and heritage, where it is filled with the rich flavours of diverse but shared cultural characteristics, many of which existed long before the establishment of ASEAN.

Furthermore, the Narrative alluded to three stages of constructed values that shaped ASEAN Identity. The first stage is the shared political values embraced and espoused by the five founding members of ASEAN. ASEAN Identity evolved further with the second stage of constructed values that emphasised co-prosperity and economic integration. The third stage came to being with the ASEAN Community formally established in 2015, where we focus on social and cultural values.

Against this prognosis, how do we distil our shared social and cultural values, and celebrate them in a sustained way to foster the we-feeling among the people of ASEAN who are culturally diverse? What can we learn from Hallyu?

The unparalleled success of Hallyu is a positive global phenomenon that is admired by many in the international community. The release of the action film "Shiri" in 1999, and K-dramas such as "Autumn in My Heart", "Sassy Girl" and "Winter Sonata" in the early 2000s provided the impetus to Hallyu's emergence for the first time, even though the foundation for the cultural environment that gave life to Hallyu was paved further back in time.

Fast forward, the halo effects of Hallyu continue to shine and captivate global audiences beyond Asia with the hit by rapper Psy "Gangnam Style" in 2012, the Oscar-winning best picture "Parasite" in 2020, and the Netflix series "Squid Game" in 2021. Likewise, K-food, K-fashion and K-beauty have gained global resonance. Hallyu reached new heights with BTS being the only contender to have six number-one songs topping the singles chart on Billboard Hot 100. It speaks volumes of Hallyu's global influence. Going forward, the proliferation of digital and over-the-top (OTT) platforms would likely lend further impetus to the success of Hallyu.

Like Hallyu, the growth of A-wave has to be organic, especially in terms of ideation — competitive yet collaborative — espousing the contest of ideas and innovation

Hallyu did not happen by chance. Its success is a result of organic ideation through a period of sustained creative activity by local artists working on different forms of arts and culture, supported by a dynamic ecosystem of private and public stakeholders.

For A-wave to thrive, we can learn a few things from Hallyu. Like Hallyu, the growth of A-wave has to be organic, especially in terms of ideation — competitive yet collaborative — espousing the contest of ideas and innovation. Furthermore, the A-wave will stand to benefit from inter-governmental cooperation in critical areas, such as in developing intellectual property protection for cultural goods and services across borders, and facilitating cross-border co-production of high-quality content by working with industries to encourage greater investments, and providing grants and incentives for content, talent, and market development.

With more people turning to culture as a means of connection, the ability of A-wave to speak to, and understand the people of ASEAN is important. One reason why Hallyu is successful is due to its ability to place the audience at the centre of its endeavour by understanding what moves and excites them. Also, where we could make space for A-wave to flourish is to further advance the democratisation of culture, and in making culture inclusive and accessible to all. While the rich cultural diversity of the region is duly acknowledged by ASEAN, we cannot take it for granted due to the growing political instrumentalisation of culture worldwide which has contributed to cultural pessimism and nativism to which our region is not inured to.

With more people turning to culture as a means of connection, the ability of A-wave to speak to, and understand the people of ASEAN is important

The success behind K-content such as “Parasite” is also the ability to create emotive connections with people through universal themes and values. Thus, for A-wave to work, it must be able to connect and resonate with the underlying values of ASEAN audiences. Storytelling is key. The ASEAN region has the wherewithal to do so. In a region rich with storytelling, ASEAN is a fertile ground to bring its multiculturalism and cultural dynamism to the fore. In today’s digital economy, it will be a lost opportunity if we do not capitalise on the nexus between digital transformation and culture to create the impetus for A-wave.

Consider and imagine a successful A-wave in the form of an A-pop group with a strong following of ASEAN audiences and beyond, or A-dramas with the label extraordinaire “Made in ASEAN” that is readily consumed by audiences irrespective of nationalities and borders. Consider and imagine A-wave in the form of our very own A-band with members hailing across different countries speaking as one and representing ASEAN as a positive cultural tour de force on the global stage.

For A-wave to succeed, it is not only about unlocking the potential of ASEAN creative makers and entrepreneurs and incentivising them to come together to drive a collective aspiration. The transformative change to necessitate A-wave’s success

is a cultural one, in that it is about fostering a mindset change toward recognising the value of regional and collective interests, leading efforts to build an inclusive and dynamic culture of collaboration, and above all, understanding the peoples of ASEAN.

The transformative change to necessitate A-wave's success is a cultural one...

A starting point is to facilitate and sustain greater networks and platforms for ASEAN creative professionals to come together to build high-quality content. The ASEAN-ROK's Film Community Programme is an exemplary case, where young and emerging filmmakers from the ten ASEAN member states interact and collaborate with one another, and learn from the best of South Korean filmmakers and industry players.

Equally useful is to develop cultural creativity and mutual appreciation of culture and the arts among our youth. It is encouraging that Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) curriculum is becoming a key part of the transformative change in the education sector. The ability to nurture the inexhaustible and renewable resource of creativity is key to sustaining A-wave. This could lead to the creation of a potential pipeline of creative workers, while at the same time cultivating a creative society where audiences are more attuned to the profound effects of creativity, and to regard it as an inseparable part of their lives.

... it will be simplistic and naive to consider that the emergence of A-wave can be built purely on the back of creativity

With a potential market of more than 660 million people, of which 224 million are youths in the ASEAN region, A-wave may be ripe for the picking. However, it will be simplistic and naive to consider that the emergence of A-wave can be built purely on the back of creativity. Given that culture is a public good, it is the public who shall decide on what moves and appeals to them, which in turn determines the viability of A-wave.

In the K-movie "Shiri", the eponymous title of the film was a reference to a species of fish found in Korean freshwater streams.[iii] In one scene, the protagonist mulled over how the fish was able to swim freely in the waters of both North and South Korea without needing to know to which side it belonged, thus providing a hopeful metaphor for the issue of reunification. In essence, an A-wave is a hopeful metaphor in and of itself, reflective of what we could achieve if we are united as one people of the region.

Only if the people of ASEAN matter can an A-wave truly emerge and thrive

The real chance of success in creating A-wave, therefore, rests with the adroit ability to harness the cultural capital and creative wherewithal with finesse and flair, while placing the people of ASEAN at the centre of our endeavour. Only if the people of ASEAN matter can an A-wave truly emerge and thrive.

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Dewi Fortuna Anwar is a member of the Indonesian Academy of Sciences (AIPI), a Research Professor at the Research Center for Politics – National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN) and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Habibie Center (THC).

In 2010-2017, Dewi served as a Deputy Secretary to the Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia. Dewi was a Distinguished Visiting Professor at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), NTU, Singapore in 2017-2018, and a Distinguished Visiting Professor at SAIS, John Hopkins University in 2007. She has written widely on Indonesia's foreign policy, and ASEAN regional political and security issues. She obtained her PhD from Monash University, Melbourne, while the M.A. and B.A. (Hons) were from SOAS, University of London.

Doobo Shim

Doobo Shim is currently a dean of Social Science College and a Professor of Media & Communication at SungshinWomen's University, Seoul, Korea. He previously served assistant professor at the National University of Singapore (2001-06), and visiting scholar at Duke University (2012-13), USA. He received a BA from Korea University (1991)and an MA and Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin Madison (2000).

He previously served as President of the Korea Speech, Media & Communication Association, and Research Director at the Korean Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (KISEAS), the Korean Association of Southeast Asian Studies (KASEAS), and the Korean Society for Journalism & Communication Studies (KSJCS). He has served as an editorial board member of many academic journals including the International Journal of Cultural Studies, Journal of Fandom Studies, and Asian Communication Research.

CONTRIBUTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Melba Padilla Maggay

A writer and a social anthropologist, Melba Padilla Maggay is a sought-after international speaker and consultant on culture and social development issues, particularly on the interface of religion, culture and development.

A specialist in intercultural communication, she was research fellow on this at the University of Cambridge in the UK and has lectured on this worldwide, including a stint as Northup Visiting Professor at Hope College, Michigan and Visiting Lecturer at All Nations Christian College in England.

As president of ISACC, she has done research on cross-cultural and development studies at the Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianity at Calvin College, Michigan; Yale University under the auspices of the Overseas Ministry Study Center; and at the National Taiwan University under a Taiwan fellowship grant of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

She is currently President of the Micah Global, a network of about 800 faith-based development organisations worldwide, where she serves as resource person on culture and development issues.

Darunee Thamapodol

Darunee Thamapodol is now an Advisor (Foreign Affairs) attached to Ministry of Culture of Thailand. Before her retirement from government official in September 2018, she was an Inspector General, Deputy Director-General of the Office of Contemporary Art and Culture and Director of International Relations Bureau, respectively. Her important role while being senior official of the cultural ministry was to spearhead the cultural collaboration among ASEAN member states since its early stage. Having graduated with degrees in both Political Science and Laws from Thailand's top universities like Chulalongkorn University and Thammasat University, Thamapodol had continuously advocated the national promotion of cultural relations of the Thai government for 39 years before assuming the present position as a special advisor in foreign affairs to Ministry of Culture since 1 October 2018.

Thamapodol is actively engaged in the promotion and implementation of intercultural forums, collaborations and activities between Thailand and other countries. With over 30 years of experience in cultural networks, her expertise has been widely recognised among participants of multilateral cultural frameworks especially ASEAN. She is also one of the regular representatives from Thailand who attends world cultural forums and conventions organised by international organisations such as UNESCO, ASEM, etc.

CONTRIBUTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Nitthaya Sitthichobtham

Nitthaya Sitthichobtham is a cultural officer at the ASEAN Cooperation Unit in the Foreign Affairs Division of the Ministry of Culture of Thailand. She has developed her knowledge, understanding, and interests in arts and culture since she was an exchange student in high school. During that time, she learned that culture is among one of the important factors in social and economic development – it boasts identity while assisting people to effectively communicate with each other.

After receiving a bachelor's degree in Business English Communication (International program) from the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University in Thailand, she has got the opportunity to extend her interests in arts and culture by working with the Ministry of Culture, specifically in ASEAN affairs where she involves with many cultural experts and artists across ASEAN. Later, she decided to take a Master's Degree in Communication and Innovation from the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA) to broaden her knowledge in promoting arts and cultures during the fast-paced digital era.

Haji Awang Mohammad Abdoh bin Haji Awang Damit

Haji Awang Mohammad Abdoh bin Haji Awang Damit was brought up in the community of fisherman in Bandar Seri Begawan having studied traditional music of hadrah, gambus and gulintangan from numerous masters in Kampong Ayer. His interest is in Music Education, Cultural Sociology, Ethnomusicology, Choral Conducting, Music Technology, Intangible Cultural Heritage, and Islamic Governance. He has written articles related to culture and the arts and has been featured in the **UNESCO Agree to Differ** and ASEAN-India book **ACT: EAST ASEAN India Shared Cultural Heritage.** He has composed more than 100 songs and has featured in collaboration albums entitled **The Name of Arirang** (with Korean Traditional Performing Art Foundation) and **The Sound of ASEAN** (with Thailand). He was also the Head Secretariat when Bandar Seri Begawan was inaugurated as the ASEAN City of Culture (2017) and the Islamic Culture Capital, ICESCO (2019). He is now the Acting Director for Culture and the Arts at the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports of Brunei Darussalam and has been active as UNESCO, SOMCA and ASEAN-COCI Focal Person and Chair for SCC of ASEAN COCI and Chair of BIMP-EAGA Socio Cultural and Education Cluster (2019-2021). He graduated with BSc. Education (Mathematics) from Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Master of Business Administration (Queensland), Master of Music Education (London), and Master of Government (Universiti Brunei Darussalam). Mohammad Abdoh is married to Dr Naasirah Abdullah-Teo and blessed with three children and four grandchildren.

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SUH, Jeong-in

Ambassador SUH, Jeong-in began his diplomatic career at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) in 1988 after passing the High Foreign Service Examination. During his time at the Ministry, Ambassador SUH served in a range of roles at the headquarter as Director, Deputy Director-General, and Director-General to oversee Southeast Asia and ASEAN and Deputy Minister for Planning and Coordination followed by Executive Director for organizing 2019 Busan Korea-ASEAN Commemorative Summit. He also spent time as a diplomat in overseas missions in Indonesia, Australia, Japan, and Thailand. In 2015, Ambassador SUH was appointed to the post of Ambassador to ASEAN and was awarded the Order of Service Merit (Red Strips) for his role convening the 2014 Busan Korea-ASEAN Commemorative Summit. From 2020, he served as Ambassador to Mexico until retiring in February 2023. Now, he is a research fellow at Korea University ASEAN Center (KUAC) in Korea and ARF EEPs. Ambassador SUH holds a master's degree in International Affairs from Elliott School of International Affairs at George Washington University, Washington D.C.

Oh Seok Geun

Born in 1961, Oh Seok Geun graduated from the Korean Academy of Film Arts in 1987 and started his career in the industry as an assistant director for Lee Myung-se's <Gagman> (1988) and <My Love, My Bride> (1990), and then directed <Do as You Like> and <The 101st Proposal>. In 2005, he made his third work <Love>.

Oh had also served as general manager of the Busan International Film Festival Since 1996 until 2000. From 2010 to 2015, Oh took a role as a CEO of Busan Film Commission and a president of the Asian Film Commissions Network. Then, he was appointed as a chairman of Korean Film Council in 2018 for three years. He was previously the director of Asian Contents & Film Market of the Busan International Film Festival.

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Vongthep Arthakaivalvatee

Vongthep Arthakaivalvatee is the Former Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) from 2015 – 2018. During his ASEAN tenure, Vongthep played a key role in advocating for the ASEAN Culture of Prevention aimed at promoting upstream and preventive measures to address challenges affecting human security, including intercultural understanding, respect for human rights, good governance and resilience. He was keen to promote ASEAN identity through culture and information sectors, particularly in relation to film cooperation.

Prior to his ASEAN role, Vongthep served in the Thai foreign service from 1994 – 2008, including two overseas postings at the Thai Embassies in Kuwait and Vienna, Austria. He subsequently worked at the Thai Ministry of Justice from 2009 – 2015, leading Thailand's initiative on the UN "Bangkok Rules" for the Women Prisoners, and various negotiations of UN resolutions on crime prevention and criminal justice. He was instrumental in establishing the Thailand Institute of Justice, where he served as Special Advisor from 2018 – 2023.

Vongthep received his B.A. in History from Whittier College and M.A. in International Policy Studies from Monterey Institute of International Studies, in California, USA. In 2021, Vongthep was the Senior Fellow of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore.

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Eric C. Thompson is Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the National University of Singapore. He holds a PhD in sociocultural anthropology from the University of Washington and was a postdoctoral fellow at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, University of California Los Angeles. He is author of Unsettling Absences: Urbanism in Rural Malaysia (2007) and The Story of Southeast Asia (2023), co-author of Awareness and Attitudes toward ASEAN (2007) and Do Young People Know ASEAN? (2016), and co-editor of Cleavage, Connection and Conflict in Rural, Urban, and Contemporary Asia (2012), Southeast Asian Anthropologies (2019), and Asian Smallholders: Persistence and Transformation (2019).

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Luis Cabrera's research has focused on international organisations and citizenship at the domestic, regional and global levels. He has published six books and more than 40 articles and book chapters, informed by field research on five continents. His most recent monograph is The Humble Cosmopolitan (Oxford University Press, 2020). It explores diversity critiques of cosmopolitanism and approaches to human rights, especially as they are posed in some postcolonial contexts. His current major project focuses on how and why regional organisations have put increasing emphasis in recent years on developing regional citizenship regimes.

John Vong

Dr John Vong is the Sustainable Finance Lead of Monash Climateworks Centre Australia and a Research Fellow teaching the Master of Public Policy Management. As a senior consultant to the World Bank Group, Asian Development Bank and UNDP. he has provided technical assistance to central banks, financial regulators, institutions, and the private sector to create enabling environments for mobilising capital towards achieving net zero and Paris-aligned objectives.

Timothy Nielander

Timothy Nielander focuses on the design and operation of development institutions and facilities, intended to facilitate cooperation between multiple States, multilateral organisations and non-State actors. He advises global partnership arrangements including the health, education and child protection, disaster risk management, agricultural innovation and financial inclusion sectors.

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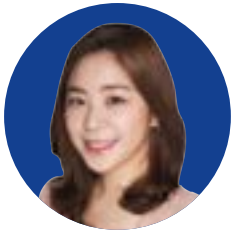

Sieun Kim

Dr Sieun Kim is the CEO of ASEAN LAB and the author of 'ASEAN LAB'. As an ASEAN expert based in Korea, Kim provides consultation to projects under the ASEAN-ROK Cooperation Fund and acts as a resource person for information related to ASEAN in Korea. Prior to this, she worked as a programme manager of the ASEAN-ROK Programme Management Team at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea (2013 – 2019) where she developed her expertise and understanding in the matters related to ASEAN-ROK relations.

Kim received a Ph.D. in International Studies from Korea University with her dissertation titled 'Possibilities of the ASEAN-ROK Cooperation Fund (AKCF) from a Multilateral Bilateral Perspective.'

Kar Lok Pang

Kar Lok Pang is the ASEAN Co-Chair of the U.S. ASEAN Young Professionals Association (UAYPA). He is currently a graduate student in Columbia University's Regional Studies: East Asia program. Kar Lok grew up in Singapore and studied abroad in the United Kingdom and United States. He is passionate about social equity and youth empowerment, having been involved in advocacy efforts for representation, inclusion, and access for ASEAN-diasporic youth across public policy, international diplomacy, academic, and non-profit spheres. In his current role, Kar Lok hopes to pave the way for the cross-fertilization of ideas and thought leadership between the US and ASEAN regions through platforms including the United Nations, World Bank, and Pacific Forum.

Tasia Matthews

Tasia Matthews is the North America Chair of the U.S. ASEAN Young Professionals Association (UAYPA). Growing up in between the United States and Thailand, she is especially passionate about matters of identity and representation, and of diversity, equity, inclusion, and access as a critical benefit to international diplomacy and security cooperation. She is also a graduate student at Johns Hopkins University, specializing in Global Security with a concentration in Strategic Studies. As a Project Manager in counterproliferation, she collaborates regularly with key stakeholders in ASEAN on chemical security issues, and hopes to expand her work on cross-border collaboration through UAYPA's initiatives.

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Benjamin Milton Hampe

Benjamin Hampe's work with ASEAN started in 2017 when he organised ASEAN's 50-year anniversary exhibition at the ASEAN Gallery in Jakarta. He went on to provide strategic planning, curatorial, and training services for the ASEAN Community Relations Division from 2018 to 2022. In 2020 he was appointed Project Director of KONNECT ASEAN, a USD 2 million development project supported by the Republic of Korea and the ASEAN Foundation's flagship arts programme. In addition to over 16 years as a consultant he has served in leadership roles for a private museum, an art fair, and commercial art galleries. He is Burmese/Australian and lives in Singapore.

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Jonathan Tan is the Head of the Culture and Information Division under the Sustainable Development Directorate, ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Department at the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta. His portfolio supports regional cooperation in the arts and culture, as well as information and media sectors. He has worked in the government service of Singapore including the central bank, and the Koerber Foundation in Berlin, Germany. He is a graduate of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London and the School of English & American Studies at the University of Sussex.

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